

Franz Liszt

Essays on Opera and Drama

A new translation of

Dramaturgische Blätter

By Allan R. Keiler and Traute M. Marshall

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"Indeed, he brings together a strength of intelligence, a rush of ideas, a breath of culture, an energy of the will, a uniqueness of individuality ... as has never been seen before."

Grand duke Carl Alexander of Weimar referring to Liszt in a letter to Hans Christian Andersen.

Introduction

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was the rock-star piano virtuoso of the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1848 he gave up the lucrative and glamorous life of the traveling performer to take on the position of *kapellmeister* – essentially music director and conductor – of the court theater of the duchy of Weimar. Famous for its classic eighteenth-century past, when Goethe, Schiller, Herder and others created an intellectual center without equal in Weimar, this small principality in Eastern Germany benefited from the intense cultural aspirations and support of the ruling family. Grand Duke Carl Friedrich of Sachsen-Weimar had appointed Liszt honorary *kapellmeister* in 1842, and by 1848 Liszt was ready to settle in Weimar, with the aim of composing more. His second goal, no less important, was to shape the musical life of this small but important ducal residence – despite its rather modest financial resources – into a model of forward-looking, ambitious support for the highest musical achievements of the time. Weimar was not Paris or Vienna; but Liszt's musical and intellectual ambitions were as outsized as his personality. The ducal consort, Maria Pawlowna, sister of Tsar Nicholas, was an enthusiastic music lover who had brought a sizable fortune to the duchy. Her only son, Carl Alexander, had known Goethe as a child, had received an excellent education, and, upon his ascension to the throne in 1853, was determined to revive Weimar's hallowed cultural position – with the help of Liszt.

Liszt's Weimar years, 1848-1861, began with his energetic struggle to improve and direct the court's musical resources with a crowded performance schedule of operas. Among them the premiere of Wagner's *Lohengrin* in 1850 was easily the most consequential. Internal struggles with the director of the spoken theater – which shared the space with opera at the court theater – and the inability to improve the financial footing to support his efforts, eventually moved Liszt to resign his position in 1858. But he stayed on in Weimar until 1861. (The best available description of this period of Liszt's life is the second volume of Alan Walker's three-volume biography of Liszt, *The Weimar Years 1848-1861*, New York 1988, paperback Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993.)

Each of the thirteen essays in this collection takes as its point of departure a specific work: incidental music for a play or an opera. The first twelve were effectively written ad hoc in

conjunction with Liszt's performances at the Weimar court theater. They date from the 1854 Weimar season. Between February and June of that year Liszt performed no fewer than nineteen operas or dramas with incidental music. (Four of the works that did not generate independent essays of their own – *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Der Freischütz*, *Wilhelm Tell*, *Zar und Zimmermann* – are discussed in the course of others.) Liszt had previously written lengthy analyses of *Tannhäuser* (1849) and *Lohengrin* (1850); they served as models for the extended treatment of *The Flying Dutchman* contained in this collection. The initial six items were published in the local newspaper (*Weimarische Zeitung*) between February 22 and April 4 1854 in the following order (and with the following German titles): *Orpheus von Gluck*, *Beethoven's Fidelio*, *Die Stumme von Portici von Auber*, *Weber's Euryanthe*, *Ueber Beethoven's Musik zu Egmont*, *Ueber Mendelssohn's Musik zum Sommernachtstraum*. The substantially longer essay, *Wagner's Fliegender Holländer*, appeared in installments between May 5 and July 2 of that same year.

To gain a nationwide and, indeed international, audience for his writings, Liszt soon had these seven essays (along with five others, also connected to his own performances) published in the venerable *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, where they appeared between June 16 and September 1, 1854. Another essay followed early in 1855, after Liszt had received the recently completed score of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* from the composer. The thirteen essays (some of them expanded and/or revised) were thus published, in their final form and sequence, under Liszt's own supervision. They form a roughly chronological survey of the works that had provoked Liszt to develop and refine his insights not only of these works but of the historical development of the always fraught synthesis of word and tone, of literature and music. Plans for a publication in book form, however, under the title *Dramaturgische Blätter*, did not materialize at the time.

While each essay bears the name of a single musical work as its title, they all touch upon and develop many other topics, as well; for Liszt had much larger aims for them than simply to provide a general introduction for a prospective audience or a précis for those who could not attend a performance. Taken together, these essays provide insights into Liszt's thinking on a multitude of issues. Specific thematic strands go through them and tie them together as with "delicate transparent threads" – to quote a phrase from the Gluck essay.

A very practical concern for Liszt was to enhance and secure the future of the Weimar court theater as a leading house where the objective of serving art and educating the audience would be more important than merely offering crowd-pleasing performances to full houses of paying customers. His many letters to the duke of Weimar pleading for more resources, especially larger performing forces, are here subtly reinforced by passionate declarations arguing that Weimar should occupy a leading position in musical life – with Liszt (and ideally Wagner) playing the role that Goethe and Schiller had played for literary culture in Germany a half-century earlier.

Tied to that plea was Liszt's observation that the training of German singers was woefully inadequate: promising singers typically had to go abroad to study with famous teachers because no thorough musical and vocal training was to be had at home. Moreover, singers in German theaters were expected to perform operas in the Italian *bel canto* tradition, in French *opéra comique* style, and, increasingly, in the budding but still small German repertoire – while their colleagues abroad needed only to specialize in their own national schools. His proposals for a *Singschule* in Weimar, a conservatory-style educational institution, became even more urgent, since the demands that Wagner made on the singers far exceeded anything known until then and would require different modes of training.

Liszt's exhortations to theater directors to be leaders and educators, not businessmen and entertainers, constitute another "leitmotif." More than half of his opening – and, indeed, programmatic – essay on *Euryanthe* consists of a general discussion of the sad state of the current opera scene in Germany and includes detailed proposals for its improvement. Liszt chose to open his essay series with *Euryanthe* because he held the opera to be an example of enlightened progress. He considered it more original and forward-looking than the much more popular *Freischütz* (which he also performed during the season) and so deserved and needed to be performed.

Several essays present Liszt the music historian. In *Gluck's Orfeo* he provides a short history of church music. The essay reveals his awareness of historical performance practice and his recognition that reliable knowledge about it can get lost. He advocates the revival of worthy works from the past – his performances of Gluck, Beethoven, and Schubert in fact constituted such a service – seeing it as a sacred duty towards the great composers of the past. He recounts the previous generation's battle between "Gluckists" and "Piccinnists" and relates it to the

contemporary battle between the traditionalists (Schumann, Brahms) and the New German School (Liszt, Wagner). The more than forty past and present composers he refers to in these essays (whether in passing or more extensively) attest to Liszt's wide knowledge of the repertoire. He created piano transcriptions of works by twelve of these masters – from Bellini to Wagner. Since Liszt lived in Paris off and on throughout his life, he knew French opera firsthand and many of its composers personally. From his Weimar base he followed German developments; Italian opera, of course, was everywhere.

One great theme pervades all the essays: the relation of word and music as it had developed over the course of music history – and especially throughout the history of staged, dramatic music and (most particularly) in the works directly under discussion. Liszt chose the essay on Meyerbeer's *Robert Le Diable* to serve as a review of operatic history in terms of its dramatic, literary and musical evolution – a development culminating in Wagner's music drama. Liszt traces the line from Italian *opera seria* as exemplified by Metastasio and Hasse. He then devotes a sympathetic and detailed discussion to Gluck's opera reform (*Orfeo*) and the first appearance therein of the "declamatory style" – knowing from his own experience the difficulties and hardships faced by reformers and innovators.

The discussion of the nature of incidental music (Beethoven's *Egmont*, Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*) and its role in enhancing spoken drama points out the problems and limits of this practice. (The typical German court or town theater presented both spoken drama and opera and thus had an orchestra on hand for incidental music.) Liszt's sympathetic treatment of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and its dismal immediate reception makes clear his admiration of the high aspirations of Beethoven the innovator – the revolutionary.

At various points Liszt tackles the issue of the libretto as literature, emphasizing the importance of its literary quality to an opera's musical and dramatic success: He ascribes the unfortunate fate of Schubert's *Alfons und Estrella* partly to the silliness of its plot, which the music could not transcend, and commiserates with Weber, whose many efforts to improve the libretto of *Euryanthe* foundered on the limitations of his librettist.

In what is probably the most original contribution of the *Dramaturgische Blätter* as a whole, Liszt traces the three stations in the history of the musical representation and dramatic integration of human emotions. They are as follows:

- 1) The musical depiction of distinct emotions in set pieces (love, revenge, despair etc.) that can be – and were – exchangeable from opera to opera. In effect, they are concert arias within a dramatic story.
- 2) A transition period, exemplified by Mozart, in which elements of opera seria and buffa are mixed, thus freeing opera from the constrictions and bombast of gods and rulers. Plots are now derived from multiple sources – history, novels, plays – with an emphasis on “situations,” i.e., reversals, revelations, events which trigger an emotional response from the protagonists in the form of aria, duet, finales etc. Over time the situations become ever more exotic, outrageous, and recherché and are tied to the desire for ever more overwhelming stage effects. Liszt takes Meyerbeer’s and Scribe’s *Robert le diable* as a highly successful example of this new type, the “opera of situations,” or *grand opéra*, which influenced succeeding generations.
- 3) The final step was to fill the one remaining lacuna: namely, learning a vital lesson from spoken drama and allowing the *characters* to generate the action. Making characters and their development the driving force transformed opera into something now better described as music drama. Liszt sums up this evolutionary trajectory thus: “The expression of feeling, the striving after situations, and the representation of character are, in our opinion, the defining traits of the three epochs that opera has been passing through.”

Last but not least, one must call attention to Liszt’s tact and generosity as a music critic. In the essay on Donizetti’s *La favorite* he declares: “Criticism that would emphasize only the weaknesses of a work of art must itself be criticized – for criticism must seek out the beauties of a piece.” He follows his own advice thoroughly. While not reluctant to point out deficiencies or to scold composers when they settle for easy effects, he nevertheless invariably takes the works under discussion seriously. He considers them – and their faults – in their historic context, one that he interprets as an evolving dramatic and musical progress. He is prepared to validate all efforts that move in that direction. The endpoint in his vision is clearly the music drama: Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For Liszt all efforts to “improve” opera – whether through tighter dramatic development, more convincing and rounded characters, the better integration of music and text, improved literary quality of librettos, a more connected, through-composed compositional style – all lead to Richard Wagner.

Liszt's essays on opera and drama afford us an invaluable glimpse into music history *while it is happening*, commented upon by a contemporary of the highest musical and literary taste and knowledge and addressed to an audience that was seriously engaged in what was going on in the contemporary musical scene. Our thanks to Franz Liszt who, besides rehearsing and performing nineteen operatic works in less than six months, found the time and energy, and made the commitment, to let posterity know what he thought noteworthy about them and how he thought they fit into the larger context surrounding the challenge of music set to words.

* * *

This new translation of Franz Liszt's *Dramaturgische Blätter* owes its genesis to confluences of stimuli, circumstances and interests. Allan R. Keiler, Liszt scholar and professor of music at Brandeis University, who had been working on a translation off and on since the early 2000s, had occasionally consulted with me about particularly thorny passages. As a native speaker of German, musically trained, and a professional translator, I was happy to offer advice. When, in 2019, I inquired about the progress of the project, I learned that Professor Keiler had completed a preliminary draft of the entire texts but owing to health and other issues, had in effect abandoned the enterprise. I offered to examine the manuscript in order to determine what needed be done to create a publishable English version of the Liszt essays.

While working on the revision, I soon learned that an English translation already existed: *Dramaturgical Leaves*, translated by Janita R. Hall-Swadley, its contents spread over two volumes. They were published in 2014 and 2016 as part of a larger project, still ongoing: *The Collected Writings of Franz Liszt* (Rowman and Littlefield). Hall-Swadley's translations are based on a flawed edition of the essays that had been prepared in Liszt's lifetime by his first biographer, Lina Ramann (1833-1912). The decision to use that edition as a source was a curious one, given that a modern critical edition of the *Dramaturgische Blätter* has been available since 1989. Ramann, for her part, had broken up Liszt's original arrangement of the essays in order to gather all his writings on Richard Wagner into one volume, publishing the remaining essays (plus a few more incidental items) in another. Hall-Swadley's translations, appearing under the title *Dramaturgical Leaves*, alas, are far from adequate. Numerous mistranslations of individual words along with misconstrued grammatical and syntactical relationships frequently result in sentences that either misrepresent what Liszt is saying or are simply incoherent. This spurred me

on to try to create a more faithful and accurate version, one based on a clear understanding of Liszt's texts and rendered in idiomatic English.

The present translation reflects Liszt's intentions as published in the *Neue Zeitung für Musik*, and available as volume 5 of the modern critical edition, *Franz Liszt's Sämtliche Schriften*, published in 1989 by Breitkopf & Härtel. The superb critical apparatus of that edition fills half the pages of the volume and covers the genesis of the essays, their publication history, and the impact of their publication. The volume also contains 58 pages of explanatory endnotes, variant lists, a bibliography, as well as the musical examples that Lina Ramann had prepared to supplement Liszt's extensive article on *The Flying Dutchman*. (We include the examples at the end of the present volume.) Liszt scholars will need (and want) to consult the critical edition to inform themselves about the state of knowledge and scholarship at the time of its publication. I have elected not to translate (even in excerpts) any of this material, even though it was of great benefit. The critical apparatus – unlike the essays themselves – should be readily comprehensible to scholars and music lovers with a good reading knowledge of German.

In Volume 2 of his biography of Franz Liszt, *The Weimar Years, 1848-1861*, Alan Walker opens the chapter headed "The Scribe of Weimar" with these remarks:

Liszt's literary output is important. In both size and scope it may be ranked with that of Wagner or Berlioz. While Liszt may lack the intellectual fascination of the one and the rapier-like wit of the other, his prose may still be read with pleasure and profit. It is true that some of his writings are apt to strike the modern reader as impenetrable. The more problematic of them (the books on Chopin and Gypsy music, for example) sometimes hide their thoughts behind a smoke-screen of convoluted prose, and more than one reader has been tempted to cast them aside in exasperation. That would be an error, however. Liszt's articles and books have an autobiographical significance; that is to say, they illuminate his interior life. They reveal his attitude towards such topics as the nature of art, the role of the artist in society, the function of criticism, and the music of the future – the very subjects which still exercise the minds of thinking musicians today.

Yes, Liszt's prose can be forbidding. The goal of this translation is to provide a readable, accurate English translation of a difficult text, rich in metaphors and allusions, written in the densely packed German prose of the nineteenth century and itself a translation – from the

French! The genesis of these essays is quite unusual and has generated much discussion about the extent of Liszt's authorship, owing to the important role played by his mistress and amanuensis, Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein. Walker summarizes the process (based on the reminiscences of Carolyne's daughter Marie, who, from age 11 to 22, was part of the Liszt household) as follows:

She herself tells us that she had total access to the so-called Blue Room, where Liszt and her mother used to do most of their work. According to Marie, Liszt dictated [in French] much of his writing to her mother who used to take down the words with pencil on quarto-sized sheets. When his thoughts concerned musical matters, he insisted on his exact wording; but in the case of more general topics he was content to suggest an outline and let her sketch it in her own way. The next day however, he would insist that these passages be read aloud to him, and at that point much would be disputed and changed. The corrected pages were then distributed to the pupils – Cornelius, Raff, Bülow – for copying and sometimes for translation into German as well. After a clean copy was made, the original pages, with all their corrections, were usually destroyed. [...] Princess Marie concludes: "I can certainly testify how carefully Liszt weighed every word my mother wanted to smuggle in, simply because she was intoxicated by its beautiful sound."
(Walker, p. 376)

The princess, nevertheless, seems to have had her way at times. Considerations of style, attitude and length lead me to suspect that the essays on *The Flying Dutchman* and on Mendelssohn's *Music for a Midsummer Night's Dream* were substantially expanded by the princess. (See also page 92, FN 32.) The working method the two engaged in also explains why the original French text, as dictated and revised, has not survived. For Liszt's immediate purpose the German version was of prime importance. The most prolific and preferred among the pupils-cum-translators involved in this volume seems to have been Peter Cornelius (1842-1874), himself both a composer and poet; others included Hans von Bülow (who would later marry Liszt's daughter, Cosima), Joseph Joachim Raff, and Richard Pohl. They carried out such tasks for Liszt in return for free lessons. We know from letters addressed to friends and colleagues that Liszt checked the printer's proofs and that he routinely referred to these and other writings as *his*. In sum: Although we do not have his original French words, we do have his thoughts and

opinions in a German version that he oversaw and approved. Awareness of this unusual collaborative process has helped at times to find the appropriate word when the German translation retained some French terms, sometimes in italics, sometimes-not – or used a German spelling of originally French words. To provide just a few examples:

In the *Flying Dutchman* essay (Part II), Liszt writes „seine Färbung [wurde] livide.“ *Livide* is not a German word; but it would be a mistake to translate it as English *livid*, since in French the meaning is *pale, sallow*.

In Part IV of the same essay we encounter the verb *cerniren*. The word, once again, does not exist in German; the-French *cerner* (to discern or identify) was clearly the underlying word.

In Part V we encounter *violassirt*. Tracing it back to the French *violacer*, we arrive at the intended meaning: to turn purple.

In the essay *La Muette de Portici* the word *emphase* appears. While its use in German is similar to the English *emphasis*, in French it also can mean *bombast*, which, in this instance, is the appropriate translation.

A word about the book's title. The German term *Blatt* (plural *Blätter*) means both a leaf (of a tree) and a sheet of paper; thus German newspapers are occasionally referred to as *Blätter*. The metaphor works well in German but I do not think the same is true in English. Alan Walker refers to the texts as “Pages about Dramatic and Stage Works,” and compares them to journalistic “think pieces” (vol. 1, p. 16; vol. 2, p. 376). I have chosen the descriptive title *Essays on Opera and Drama* to suggest the wide scope of a theater director discussing the intersection of word, music and stagecraft. The allusion to Richard Wagner's *Oper und Drama* was not accidental.

The number of footnotes has been kept to an absolute minimum. The first names of obscure persons have occasionally been added in square brackets (in order to facilitate a search on the Internet). For the rest, it seemed unnecessary – in the age of search engines – to add many explanatory footnotes. The few footnotes that appear in the original text itself are preceded here by “Liszt:” Not only Liszt's sentences but his paragraphs, too, tend to be inordinately long. I have retained Liszt's original paragraph breaks – indicated by a blank line. Moreover, I have introduced paragraph breaks (but without an extra line) as a substitute for the dashes-Liszt used

after a text section to indicate the conclusion of a particular thought or topic. As seemed warranted and for ease of reading and orientation, I have introduced additional paragraph breaks.

Liszt's essay on *The Flying Dutchman* is quite unlike the others – and not only in length (47 pages plus 12 pages of musical examples in the B&H edition versus under ten pages for most of the others). Here the author provides a thorough interpretive description and analysis of the entire opera, with extensive quotations from the libretto. Owing to its high literary and dramatic quality, I was reluctant to offer a prose translation of my own. Many rhymed translations, written to be sung, exist, since operas were usually performed in the vernacular throughout the nineteenth century and into the 1950s. Scores and piano reductions for the English-speaking market beginning in Wagner's own time offered many versions. Not only is their language often stilted; they frequently take unusual liberties with regard to content —softening and “Christianizing” the harsh nihilistic tone of the tale. Fortunately, there is a fine, faithful modern version: It was prepared by the brilliant director and producer David Pountney for the 1982 performance by the English National Opera. (ENO maintains the tradition of performing opera in English.) We present this version, which is rhymed and singable, side by side with the German text, since music lovers today will hear and know Wagner's *Dutchman* in its original language.

My thanks go first of all, to Allan Keiler for having laid the groundwork for this translation and for giving me the latitude to finish the project as I deemed best. Dorothea Redepenning, one of the editors of the Breitkopf & Härtel edition of the *Dramaturgische Blätter*, kindly answered a number of my questions. Sir David Pountney generously gave permission to quote extensively from his translation of *The Flying Dutchman*. My husband, Robert L. Marshall, a former colleague of Allan Keiler's at Brandeis University, read and improved the manuscript with his usual care.

Traute M. Marshall

Weber's *Euryanthe*

In the matter of *Fidelio*, Beethoven had to empty to the dregs the cup of bitterness. He might have found ample compensation, however, – along with a shining signal from the younger generation – in Weber's request asking him to revise the score of *Euryanthe*. Unfortunately, tension had arisen in the relationship between the two great masters that prevented any promising outcome to this attempted rapprochement – one toward which Weber had taken the first step.¹ Certain mediocrities, along with a number of intrusive friends, prevented Beethoven's noble soul from setting aside his irritation and properly appreciating the profound tribute to his genius that an artist of Weber's stature expressed in this request. Weber regarded *Euryanthe* as the finest expression of his dramatic instincts and desired the divine symphonist to approach his work with the brilliant fire of his genius. Indeed, we find that Weber, with his aspiration to incorporate into opera the richness, along with the most recent developments of instrumental music, had already envisioned the future form of drama.

At the same time Weber made known to Schubert the score of *Euryanthe* by singing and playing it for him at the piano. But Schubert considered *Euryanthe* to be less successful than *Freischütz*; Weber broke with him almost completely, never forgiving him for his judgment, since he himself valued *Euryanthe* far more than *Freischütz*. Which one of these two composers of genius was right? Neither was wrong, of course; and both could have justified their views with persuasive arguments. For example, there is, on the one hand, the evidence of the extraordinary and *well-deserved* popularity of *Freischütz*; on the other hand, *Euryanthe* is held in higher esteem by those practicing and thinking musicians – the minority phalanx – whose lofty aspirations outlive the blind and fleeting play of fortune.

In order to understand the unfortunate gap between the equal merit and unequal success of the two works we must examine their subject matter more closely. The libretto of *Der Freischütz* provides one of the most worthwhile operatic subjects yet devised. It is handled in the most

¹ It was Anton Schindler, who claimed in his 1840 biography of Beethoven, that Weber asked Beethoven to revise *Euryanthe*, a claim not otherwise confirmed.

fortunate way and maintains a tone in which sentimentality alternates, in the most fitting ways, with charm, cheerfulness and serenity, just as the restlessness, pain and agitation of love alternate with naiveté and genuine feeling so as to satisfy the judgment of the *few*, while touching the hearts of the *many*. By taking over this entire design – perfect in its genre – from the hand of the poet, Weber not only imbued this folk-like material with all the effective musical resources at his disposal. He broadened the dimensions of the work, providing it with a poetic aura; he enriched the characters, increased the inner warmth and heightened the tone colors and made all the contours sharper by spreading over the entire work the shimmering charm of the most original forms. Within the framework of his material, he created a new, delightful depiction of nature – one in which vivid greenery and a thousand-fold brilliance of colors are touched deeply by the German spirit: a spirit that lives and moves in nature. *Der Freischütz* thus became a masterpiece! Even the owl that flaps its wings and rolls its fiery eyes plays its part in the lasting success of this opera. Even if not a single musical connoisseur were present when the work is given, the strange phantasmagoria of the Wolf's Glen Scene will never fail to fill the house – at least with children, since watching a performance of *Der Freischütz* constitutes one of the national German forms of youngsters' entertainments. We are far from reproaching families who familiarize their children with Weber's genius in this way, since in the end they will also be *hearing* something on these occasions. Yet it would be hard to persuade us that children are taken so conscientiously to attend this opera in order to instill in them a taste for the drama of the demonic natural forces unfolding in the orchestra. It is more than reasonable to argue that the thriving revenue which *Der Freischütz* earns to this day is owed, in part, to the owl, the skeleton, the wild hunt, the disagreeable Samiel, and so on – which are so engaging for the *spectator*.

There is no skeleton to be found in *Euryanthe*, no owl, no Wolf's Glen, not even a single little waltz that all the young ladies can blissfully play and dance. There is no little bridal song to hum *in spe* and no hunting chorus appropriate for a barrel organ. We do find a hunting chorus in *Euryanthe*, too. But here the hunters are no longer jolly mountain folk, for whom a fresh, lively melody with a gracious original rhythm will do; rather, they are knights and aristocrats who devote themselves to the noble hunt. And although the chorus, like the one in *Freischütz*, rocks back and forth on the leisurely foundation of tonic and dominant, it is not, owing to its

nobler turns and declamatory phrasing, a piece suitable for whistling or playing on the barrel organ. Conversely, the same qualities do earn for it a permanent place on the concert programs of London and Paris. In other respects, too, an enormous difference prevails between the texts of the two operas. In spite of the various improvements that Weber insisted on incorporating into the text of *Euryanthe*, the libretto nonetheless reveals the lack of artistic creativity on the part of feminine talents. Weber ignored this inherent deficiency; rather he tormented his unfortunate poetess in vain with suggestions for improvements – suggestions that improved nothing. One creates a park not by shoveling sand but by clearing the woods with an axe. Similarly, such improvements are not really useful unless they deal with an overflow, not a dearth of material and ideas. For all that, the text, as well as the music, for *Euryanthe* possess the unmistakable virtue of striving after greater things, of possessing a loftier passion, in comparison with *Der Freischütz*. Text and music both have nobler points of departure. They rise above domestic and rural life, boldly reaching toward a vision of the heroic. With the composition of *Euryanthe* Weber took the first step onto new land. He was aware of himself as the forerunner of a new era: he had premonitions of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*.

Feeling that he was able to absorb the poetic force of such subject matter –drawn from a higher sphere and animated by stronger emotions than that of *Der Freischütz*, Weber contented himself with the musical quality of the individual numbers apart from the plot. In the process he forgot that the libretto itself was inadequate and that its deficiency would inflict irreparable damage to his work's beauty. Indeed, Schubert may have felt this inadequacy, without accounting for it, when he pronounced his judgment. Wagner, however, recognized the *mésalliance* between Weber's genius and the talent of his poetess and vigorously protested against all the *mésalliances* that drag down great musicians without elevating mediocre poets. With this eloquent declaration Wagner performed an incalculable service to the art of drama, which, one hopes, will happen to his other ideas that have gradually led to this incontestable basic principle: "that a musician of genius must ally himself with a poet of equal stature – that even the best music will endure a more or less unfavorable fate whenever mediocre poetry presumes to be its carrier." ² It may be that many of Wagner's numerous ideas about art will

² Not a direct quotation of Wagner, but rather a summary of his thoughts in *Oper und Drama*.

not produce quick and successful results. Nevertheless, anyone of good judgment who takes into account the fact that only *those* who generate a host of ideas will ever produce ideas of significant import, will be grateful to Wagner for having made it abundantly clear that a noble poetic foundation is absolutely essential for the creation of beautiful and striking musical ideas.

[Friedrich] Kind, the librettist who succeeded so admirably with his text for *Der Freischütz*, also had many innovative ideas about the art of drama. (He developed them especially in the foreword to his *Van Dyck*.) Although not as far-reaching and ambitious as those of Wagner, they contain many related thoughts, and even, to a certain degree, contain their seed.

It is not our intention to discuss at length the performance of *Euryanthe* that recently took place on our stage. The question of the *when* and *how* of such performances is too lengthy a subject, one that we must refrain from broaching. In general, however, one can point out that at the moment there is hardly any theater in all of Europe committed to the artistic principle that a theater proves its worth only by pursuing genuine and sincere artistic activity and could therefore be recognized as seminal. We see everywhere only a few isolated artists who pander to the ephemeral curiosity of the crowd, or produce occasional novelties that fill the cash box with a certain number of performances. We look around in vain for a stage that sets a justified artistic standard and could therefore be deemed trendsetting. The reason for this situation is obviously to be found in the fact that theater managements have too often imitated those savages who, according to Montesquieu, cut down the tree in order to gather the fruit.

Constantly in hot pursuit *only* of making money, the means for attaining that end will get completely lost. By changing all the grain in one's possession into cash, no seed grain will remain; and one would wait for the harvest in vain if no grain had been entrusted to the earth.

Let us just consider for today the state of the art of music, without, however, altogether renouncing a closer examination of matters pertaining to the spoken drama when an opportunity arises; for if a decisive voice in matters concerning opera is so often given to theater people, why should not musicians voice their own views on drama? As to music, no one has considered raising its level and promoting only excellent music, in order to spread musical education and gradually create a capable audience, one whose taste and fair judgment would consistently demand good and beautiful repertoire. Doing so would have been the appropriate means to make the stage flourish by recruiting a significant number of

subscribers. But no! We are offered only the usual random, crowd-pleasing performances. They forget that the surging masses brought together by chance are incapable of a serious and permanent interest in the arts. They behave just as obstinately and unwilling as children: once they own a toy, they grow bored with it and throw it away. Those who treat art as a toy for their audience will get their just reward when the audience responds to the most precious gifts with the foolishness, indifference and disdain of spoiled children.

A theater that would be guided according to a basic principle elevated above the contingencies of the moment, that turned its attention not only to the *present* but to a distant future and a continuous honorable existence, and to a prosperity securely supported by a capital that bore normal, solid interest, (a capital which it would not risk on the vicissitudes of frivolous fashion, as the troupes of strolling actors are wont to do) today such a theater, even if only due to its uniqueness and a well-earned reputation, could look forward to more regular and substantial financial benefits than have so far been achieved when one resorts to ad hoc means to sustain a bare and miserable existence from one day to the next.

Often, when pondering the essence of things and observing how they develop, one soon realizes that there are benefits that can only be achieved as consequences or results; they elude those who pursue such benefits directly and exclusively. The same is true for financial benefits in matters of art. In order to acquire them, they must not be one's first and foremost concern. *An artistic institution cannot dispense with art*. One snatches in vain at *effects* if, in doing so, one ignores their *causes*. Art is the seed corn that must be sown if one hopes to attain a rich harvest. Do we ever really encounter an artistic institution that acquired significant material benefits without first having established a *legitimate* reputation based on genuine merit in the service of art and only then, as a consequence, realized a growing profit? But it has happened all too often that, once art had brought in money, it was driven out to be replaced by the golden calf. All too often artistic institutions continued to live off their former merits adding nothing to them but charlatanism or lethargy. Experience teaches, however, that, in the course of time, such processes of moral dissolution must necessarily lead to material ruin.

In a number of respects Weimar would enjoy unique advantages if it sought a position of rank among German theaters that would no longer place it among the next-to-last in artistic importance. The circumstances that provide these advantages will surely not be recognized by those who consider it a misfortune for Weimar that Goethe and Schiller once lived here, and wish to shake off the onerous burden imposed by that great era. Nevertheless, this legacy would entitle that selfsame Weimar, with every justification and before the whole world, to make this pledge: to create the kind of neutral yet fertile province where the artistic and literary rivalries of the German tribes could be reconciled, a place where *German art* could grow and achieve greatness. And if the theater intends to preserve, propagate, and honor the traditions of earlier times – which history, in fact, attaches to the name of Weimar (and how could such a fact be hidden!) – then its repertory must be so organized that the *when* and *how* of performances like those of *Euryanthe* (which deserves a better fate than to be exploited like a single ingredient in a motley tossed salad) would be artistically justified. Only after it has succeeded in creating a repertory based on solid artistic principles will it be realistic to hope for a future – brilliant in every way – for a theater that *even now* evokes enduring and devoted memories.

In Weimar the court contributes to the maintenance of the theater by means of a generous yearly contribution. It can justifiably be characterized as a large (nay exorbitant) sacrifice, since it covers three fourths of the theater's expenses. If one wonders, in view of this considerable expenditure, how it is used and what benefits it brings, one will quickly realize that neither art nor the economics has suitably benefited. None of the dramatic genres has sufficiently lived up to the glory of Weimar's memories, and the stage groans under the burden of this responsibility. Anyone who understands the present difficult state of affairs – unsatisfactory for all concerned and increasingly becoming noticeable – will instinctively feel compelled to find a decisive antidote. But the more closely anyone considers this oft-discussed question, the more the choice boils down to the two existing alternatives: *court theater* or *town theater*: Is it better to sustain a court theater devoted to art and to the past, present and future glory of Weimar (with the requisite patience, care and the seeding needed for every harvest, so one may enjoy its future benefits)? Or would it be preferable to establish a town theater, which would relieve the court of a burden that (since it has failed to yield

satisfying returns) has proven excessive? All attempts beyond these two options can only end in a sad and hapless wavering within a system of ad hoc, palliative means – in a miserable hand-to-mouth existence. Such an outcome would put the theater in danger of sinking to a level even worse than that of a town theater, a provincial theater.

We are all-too-familiar with the usual practice of town theater directors. The director of a Weimar town theater could do nothing different from the directors in cities like Freiburg³, Posen, Chemnitz, Stettin and others. He would race over all possible repertoires – as in a steeple-chase – in pursuit of his sole objective: profit. Art is of no concern here; the theater becomes an object of speculation – a leasehold.

Could a town theater even survive in Weimar? Perhaps not. We hasten to add, however, that the dignity of art would be better honored by following the example of Oldenburg. The decision there has been to completely shut down a theater which neither corresponds to what one rightfully demands from a court theater, nor measures up to what the director of a larger town theater is able to achieve. We believe that, if one were to do this, one would be demonstrating greater respect for the proud tradition of our local theater than by vegetating in a dull state whose shortcomings become all the more apparent owing to the memory of the great Weimar tradition and the claims arising from it.

No one will demand from a court theater in Weimar the scenic splendor of the great European stages. No one will expect the fairy-like corps de ballet or an orchestra three times the normal size, such as Meyerbeer recently employed in his *Etoile du Nord*. Nor will anyone demand all the expenses for scenery and stage machinery that are offered the public in Paris, Berlin, or Vienna. From Weimar one demands nothing but *art*, more art, and an art free of the sham found in Paris, Berlin or Vienna. In order to establish such true art here on our stage, the following three essential objectives have to be pursued energetically.

³ Liszt almost certainly means Freiberg (an der Unstrut), a prosperous city in Saxony with a theater founded in 1790 and located in the same region as the other towns mentioned.]

1. A more intelligent and genuine reverence for the masterworks of the past than is now the case. That means, seeking out all the variants, newer and better translations, rare versions, more accurate and skillful revisions. – Mount performances of masterworks that have been undeservedly forgotten. None of that chaotic approach to the performance of famous operas by earlier masters; none of those careless revivals which, in an attempt to carry out an onerous duty, denigrate more than preserve the memory of significant masters. Works must set off each other. That is, they should be presented in a sequence that leads the public to a more intimate understanding of, as well as an insight into the artistic ideals their composers pursued. Above all, however, there must be no such revivals without sufficient resources, without satisfactory casting of roles, in short, without the possibility of staging them respectably and without having to anticipate the sneers of those who have seen them performed satisfactorily elsewhere.
2. Active, sustained, conscientious cultivation and study of works that are now in favor: well-planned, impartial alternation of the best works of Italian, French, and German masters, without prejudice against one or the other genre and without excluding one or the other school. A zealous effort (a) to mold productions by rehearsing them with the utmost diligence, thus allowing their artistic beauties to become more readily apparent; and (b) to imbue them with a more noble character than is usually the case in those theaters where works are mounted only because they are in fashion and bring in revenue, and where one settles too readily for a conventionally programmed season. An energetic engagement with a new work as soon as it has appeared, lest it be served up as a stale novelty having already ended its career everywhere else. To dress up embalmed mummies can only result in publicly discrediting the theater in the wider world.
3. Extensive, generous hospitality toward unpublished works that one believes have a future: works whose striking qualities are evident, even if only in part. It must not matter whether the author is famous or still unknown, whether he is from South, North, East or West Germany, whether he belongs to our hemisphere or to another. In short, seizing the initiative when it comes to new works. Cultivate a sympathetic, open-minded fostering of young talent; provide strong encouragement for it by performing promising works under favorable auspices. Moreover, not only superficial personal acquaintance, but intimate association with all significant dramatic talents; showcasing them worthily on our stage. Strongly reject and

banish anything calculated for mere visual spectacle, before which true art always blushes with shame. Rigorously exclude, as a matter of principle, all those vulgar productions, by means of which even truly talented artists are all too often willing to tease out applause and pursue easy advantages that are beneath their dignity.

By strictly and conscientiously observing these three objectives, justice and satisfaction will be rendered to art of the past, the present and the future.

We know only too well that so-called practical people will claim that the theater cash box would suffer under such conditions: that one only makes money if one thinks and dreams of nothing but money. Without entering into a dispute over whether true art could still find any sympathy on German soil, in the heart of Germany – in that selfsame Weimar from which emanated, as from a focal point, those rays of light which gave Germany the brilliance of its intellectual culture – we respond very simply. At the very least, establish a town theater whose duty it is to deliver, like provisions, a number of entertaining performances. And with that everything is said. Art then has nothing more to argue – and no empty memories to evoke.

Beethoven's *Fidelio*

Beethoven's only dramatic work currently holds one of the most distinguished places in the series of sublime creations whose recognized excellence one cannot impugn without offending aesthetic propriety. One listens to such works confident that one cannot be mistaken in one's feeling of admiration for them. This opera has endured for more than forty years, and it has been roughly twenty years now that it has been performed on nearly every German stage as a recognized masterwork; this means that any dramatic institution must deem it a disgrace not to be able to perform it in worthy fashion. But how did the work fare during the first twenty years after its completion? It was treated disparagingly by artists, condemned by critics, set aside by theater directors and forgotten by the public. There is no doubt that Beethoven would have offered the German stage a succession of dramatic masterworks if only *Fidelio*, his firstborn, had not been met with shoulder shrugging, mockery, even derision but, instead, at least with the respect that such profound feeling and powerful workmanship should have compelled from a more mature public. As for the demands placed on a consummate dramatic work, *Fidelio* leaves much to be desired. A lack of stage experience is apparent both in the choice of imperfect subject matter as in the almost exclusively symphonic treatment of the orchestra and voices.

Nevertheless, the wonderful lyrical and orchestral beauties, in which the work abounds, are so dominant that they replace – and make one forget – more essential dramatic effects. These lyrical and orchestral beauties obscure the weakness of the libretto to such an extent that they produce a wealth of vivid, incisive, deep emotions, despite the meager interest of the dramatic situations.

When listening to this enthralling and shattering music, no artist, no cultured soul could fail to be profoundly moved, to admire the work, to feel the deepest sympathy for the master: the suffering genius who, with righteous indignation, forsook a path of mental struggle strewn with thorns.

The overture, in particular, is now received with general enthusiasm, unanimously accepted as one of the most glorious creations of the Muse of music; but, for Beethoven, it was a source of the most bitter vexation. A faithful and instructive account of this episode can be found in a book (which, incidentally, we cannot otherwise recommend): *Schindler's Biography of Beethoven*. In it one reads of the torture to which Beethoven was condemned again and again when he was forced to alter the overture as many as four times – indeed, to denounce the piece –

in order to make things right for the small-mindedness of the pygmies around him. With what miserable characters he had to battle, and what mediocrities routed *him* off the field!

A comparison of the four different extant versions reveals the forced crippling of the idea, the gradual weakening in rhetorical power of the original version – whose glowing passion and thrilling power we now admire – while Beethoven was coerced (four times over!) to weaken the pulsating energy of his heartstrings, and debase himself gradually to the level of King Midas's ears which were to judge him. Not long thereafter, the same goings-on took place on the same stage with a work by a master hardly less venerated. Weber's *Euryanthe* experienced the same fate; and the hasty judgment of the public coalesced, unfortunately, into a nasty pun only too well known and perpetrated.⁴ Like Beethoven, Weber wrested the most refined beauties from muddleheaded dramatic material. But his work, too, was misunderstood and mistreated. Only the brilliant overture, fortunately, escaped the barbaric mutilations to which Beethoven wrongly consented.

It is, in fact, profitable now and then to inquire into the reasons for the success of certain theatrical creations. Who can estimate how long the full expression of the noblest feeling that we encounter in *Fidelio* might have remained hidden behind the thick veil of oblivion had not a brilliant, passionate artist appeared who, with rare intellectual daring and with interpretive insight almost uniquely hers, comprehended the whole range and electrifying effect of a role that combines the purest femininity with masculine energy and heroic strength; it corresponded completely to her very individuality, and her stage costume displayed the advantages of her beauty in the most brilliant light. With the true instinct of an artist Madame Schröder-Devrient intuitively sensed the emotional appeal of this role; and there was hardly a listener who did not applaud wildly when this enchanting woman, in men's clothes, with an emphatic gesture that shook every heart and yet with an inimitable grace, aimed the pistol at the petrified governor. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to claim that Germany owes this treasure in equal parts to Beethoven and Madame Schröder-Devrient, a treasure it now calls, with justified pride, its own; but we cannot deny our gratitude to the hand that gave us this treasure, which needed her intervention lest it remain buried, unrecognized, in the sand.

⁴ In French *ennuyant(e)* means boring or annoying.

Will this example protect other works of equal stature from suffering the same fate? Hardly! In matters of art, genius reveals itself through progressive stages of inventiveness. But, as has been amply stated and elaborated elsewhere, innovative music cannot quickly capture general sympathy. Consequently, incidental circumstances will usually determine the moment when innovative works are finally recognized and properly esteemed. Thus it will forever be a sacred mission given to those who can recognize the inherent worth of a work of art and anticipate what place the future will accord it. This is why the protection that courts bestow on art (and without which its survival might lack the necessary foundation) has always been considered a great blessing. Only court theaters – making independent decisions immune to considerations of quotidian personal and financial concerns (which in private undertakings are necessarily paramount), and by recognizing and treasuring beauty in and of itself – can ordain, as it were, its existence and preservation. By dint of its own will a court can protect and nourish true art until it is able to take root in the soil of the general population – which is always more difficult to cultivate – and thereby become the fruitful property of the whole nation. Owing to the political order, as well as to the most refined education, courts enjoy a place at the highest rung of society and are uniquely able both to recognize the beautiful and to lend it prestige. Some cases in point and speaking only of opera: Queen Marie Antoinette, whose preference for Gluck was for a long while his only support in Paris, or the Empress Josephine, whose command was necessary to compel the performance of Spontini's *La Vestale*. Nowhere can one find a better analogy to such instances than in Weimar, where the court, both in the past and the present, has assumed the task of granting creative luminaries a place from which their light can shine unhindered.

How important is it whether the operas of Wagner, against which systematic opposition is waging a veritable full-fledged war, enjoy a triumph here and there? It was in Weimar that they first found a home from which the brilliance of their originality could radiate. This is a fact whose full significance for art will reveal itself only gradually. We owe this to a single circumstance: When these operas were presented at court, there was less concern about their momentary success than about raising the level of art and establishing a repertoire that commanded respect, since the survival of court theaters does not rest on the theater cash box alone – unlike private enterprises that must replenish it daily by any means and at any price.

A second *Fidelio* exists today: a work of lofty, powerful conception, likewise emerging from the mind of a master of symphonic thought, but a master who grasped more readily the specifics of dramatic design and has manipulated its necessary demands and resources more adroitly than Beethoven. We speak of *Benvenuto Cellini* by Hector Berlioz. His hour has not yet struck; and, unfortunately, the fact that for the moment the composer walks among the living stands in his way. But once rid of the local pettifoggeries that have generated so much resistance in one place or another, this work will be recognized and appreciated as one of the most significant of our time; and the Weimar stage will be able to boast that it was the first to rescue it from obscurity.

Gluck's *Orfeo*

During the twenty-year reign of Grand Duke Karl Friedrich, the birthday of the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, on the 16th of February, had always been celebrated by a festival performance in the theater. Although this year the widow's mourning did not allow her to be present, the theater was as full and brightly lit as if she had actually been there. This time Gluck's *Orfeo* had been prepared, and the theater management deserves the highest praise for its choice. One cannot adhere too strongly to the principle of selecting only works of art worthy of the meaning and significance of the festival celebration for whose enhancement art is to play its part. This principle is observed with the greatest success at various German courts when similar opportunities arise for spending lavish sums on scenery and costumes to honor important individuals. The public in general is neither so cultivated nor sufficiently refined in matters of taste to eagerly flock to the performance of serious works, admired through the centuries for their expressive grandeur. For that reason, it is advantageous to present such works to the public on days when social convention and loyal curiosity draw the public into the theater regardless of what happens to be on the program. Even if many listeners would prefer less exalted productions, or even admit to favoring mediocre and banal ones, court theaters should, in such cases, simply ignore such secondary demands. Rather, they must demonstrate their respect for art – whose interests they are meant to represent – by offering, in honor of King and Prince, only that which is most beautiful, noble, and profoundly valuable in art. And when boredom arises in those who do not comprehend the elevated language spoken by art – so uniquely appropriate to such occasions – let us all remember that art, like all powerful forces, has its own rules of decorum – its etiquette – which must be acknowledged and respectfully observed even by those for whom art's deeper meaning remains inaccessible.

Gluck's *Orfeo* is one of the first of the great master's creations that introduced dramatic expression and truth into opera. In this work we observe the simplicity and unpretentiousness, the sparing economy of means that we often notice when art forges a new path. These qualities include an admirable directness of expression of the kind scarcely encountered in the later stages of development. Gluck's treatment of the myth of Orpheus's descent into Hell leaves untouched the symbolic and prophetic connections, which the study of mythology has attempted to uncover.

For him, Orpheus is no superhuman being, no God or demi-God, no genius who leads mankind further along the path of perfection. He is merely a husband grieving over the loss of his beloved, whose pain is expressed in most moving tones.

It would be difficult to portray more genuinely and faithfully the profound grief at the death of a soul cherished and loved by everyone than occurs here in the first Chorus and Prayer. In Orpheus's laments we encounter not the faintest trace of gloomy despondency or impassioned quarrel with the severity of fate. His pain is incurable, but mild, like the memory of an unclouded and unspoiled love. We do not hear the wrenching lament over someone whose blessed happiness had been achieved with heartache and tears, the loss of which we mourn the more passionately the harder we have fought for it. We do not encounter one of those powerful temperaments whose pride bleeds while their love is in tears. Rather, a noble and purely human anguish speaks to us and moves us with the depth of an inexpressible melancholy.

Indeed, this can be observed in all of Gluck's characters. His efforts are not directed at portraying the emotions of particular, idiosyncratic individuals whose appearance on the stage is bound up with uncommon and exceptional qualities. His strength reveals itself, on the contrary, in the portrayal of universal human emotions in all their intensity. It is not a specific individual's love, anger or hatred that he seeks to represent in his works. Rather, love, anger, hatred – as expressed in the works of this master – carry the imprint of universal human emotion as it is felt more or less in the breast of every sensitive human being.

Perhaps this helps to explain both the small number of his admirers as well as their great enthusiasm. The larger public would rather have its imagination aroused and inhabited by exceptional or uncommon things than by these simple strains welling up from the depths of the human soul. Those, however, who listen to them with sensitivity feel moved – more than virtually anywhere else – by Gluck's genuine and never exaggerated portrayals of pure emotional inwardness. They cannot fail to experience a certain similar effect to that of viewing ancient art. In both cases the beauty of form, enchanting grace of outline; in both cases the same calm strength, the same impressive yet engaging effect that uplifts us by moving us.

The scene of Orpheus in Tartarus, in which the emotion dwelling in his soul overcomes the opposition of the demons, is too generally acknowledged and admired as classic to warrant further praise here. His entrance into Elysium is characterized by that sense of peace and bliss that transports the spirit, in calm flight, to the pure realm of the shades where, in accordance with

the concept of antiquity, happiness is the cessation of all pain. The scene between Orpheus and Eurydice requires considerable dramatic talent from the singers for its full effect to be realized. Because of the simple means employed here by the composer, the listener places increased demands on the initiative and acting of the two performers to keep his interest engaged.

A man of genius exists in and for himself, working in secret, able to create, to invent, to be inspired, *clairvoyant*. He pronounces the word that others stumble to spell out; he discovers the secret that others seek, finds light where others grope in darkness, executes where others only later notice necessity and opportunity. But the sphere of his action, the form in which it manifests itself, the establishment of his manner and method, the color of his banner, the direction of his strivings all depend on the medium in which nature has placed him, on where and when he appears, and on the ideas among which he arises. The concepts inherited from his contemporaries are a pedestal from which he casts a powerful glance into the past – or into the future: into the past in order to sum it up, in order to meld its ideas, manner of expression and forms into perfect types that remain inimitable; and into the future, in order to be the first to plumb its depths, to unveil its mystery, and, like a prophet, to prepare its path. Gluck belonged to this latter category. Striving to achieve an inner connection between poetry and music, between the poetic nature of the drama and musical declamation, he attempted to make arable a soil that had lain fallow for centuries, a soil awaiting its cultivator. He constructed the base of a monument that may yet await its completion.

Gluck was born at a time when music, having progressed to an adequate stage of development with respect to harmony, was seeking out new resources, occupying itself more and more with developing its dramatic potential. The church style, although diligently and respectfully cultivated and always referred to as the *genre sublime*, came to be regarded more as a subject for connoisseurs than for music lovers. It was opera that increasingly attracted the most eminent composers, the *gran maestri*. This transition from church music to opera became apparent, and while brilliant names like Haydn, Mozart, Paisiello, Cherubini continued to devote their energies to the sacred service, not one of them turned his back on opera; the number of those who devoted themselves exclusively to opera continued to grow.

After the art of music had taken its first steps in the religious realm, as indeed the poetry of more than one culture had done, too, the moment drew near when it should step into the secular sphere and attract there – as if with a powerful magnet – the most significant manifestations of poetry

and literature. Music, by means of declamation and instrumentation, was to bestow on drama and poetry its intense expressive capacity, the full power of its language, the bold outline of its timbres and the brilliance of its tonal splendor. Gluck composed but a single four-voice *De profundis*; otherwise, he concentrated all of his energies on opera. By completely uniting the accents of music with those of poetry, he achieved a new propulsive energy, and in so doing displayed rare perspicacity regarding the future of his art: he delineated the path on which it had to proceed and sowed the seed of an idea that still is awaiting its full fruition.

Church music did not intend to emphasize the accents of verse and text. It was content to allow its overall architecture to stir sensations that corresponded to the general meaning expressed in the text, be they solemn, lamenting or jubilant. By such means church music succeeded in achieving effects of grandiose beauty. In time, however, as a result of a certain monotonous repetition, these effects inevitably weakened and ultimately wore out. Opera, on the other hand, hardly bothering with fugue and counterpoint, placed its emphasis on melody alone, on vocal facility and the sensuous enjoyment of sound. A composer did not much bother to give to melody anything more than a character that loosely approximated the meaning of the words. This casual approach made it easy to alter the text – indeed to replace it with a different one.

Gluck was the first to insist that the text of an opera be conceived according to poetically motivated, truly dramatic principles. He demanded situations that gripped one's interest, dialogue in an elevated style, and the exact reproduction of a text's meaning and content in music: music, which would cling to the contours of the ideas contained in the text like a wet garment. He called for the introduction of a fitting connection – an essential identity of an idea and its musical representation – between the dramatic meaning of a situation and its musical treatment. He unhesitatingly abandoned the existing conventional opera tracks: the stereotypical patterns of prevailing forms. Their driving force was the dramatic contrast between different vocal registers which had shaped the construction and sequence of arias, duets, trios and so on. Gluck extended the recitative, rescuing it not only from its earlier lack of importance but fusing it, according to the required mood, with the arioso, blending it with the cantabile and interweaving it finally with melody itself.

The opposition that rose up against him would have crushed any lesser genius. Piccinni viewed himself as the representative of *pure, genuine* music – music enjoyed *for its own sake*. He put

himself forward as the champion of traditional, *well-known laws* and established practices: for *melody*, for those hallowed forms (as they were already called at the time) whose mixture of different motifs – the changing stews – created the sole and true feast for the ears. Piccinni's partisans heaped attacks on the composer of *Orfeo* in books and pamphlets; they portrayed him as a Herostrates who throws the flaming torch into the temple of the supreme goddess of melody. Never had a question relating to art provoked such an abundance of incidents and reprisals, so passionate and fierce a battle, as the quarrels between the Gluckists and Piccinnists. And, in fact, the cause was more than justified! It was a question of whether music should languish in an area grown too confined for it, or whether limitless new ground should open before it; whether it should go to ruin when it was clearly wearing itself out, or whether – by virtue of its own unique qualities – it should find its destiny, passing through a series of transformations, the final goal of which we cannot, for the moment, sketch out with any certainty. Currently, many books and pamphlets are being published pro and contra two different systems, one of which will gradually conquer the stage, while the other ardently defends the old practice. It would be interesting to look for the analogies which must exist between the arguments of the earlier parties and those advanced by supporters of the various current points of view, as they carry on a war similar to the old one, albeit under different names and forms and with different goals.

Did Gluck envision all the consequences that his premises entailed? Those who stand at the head of their squadron, who struggle in dense hand-to-hand fighting, the leaders of daring phalanxes whose mission it is to take by storm posts that have remained unoccupied by the human spirit: rarely can they recognize the importance of their individual struggle for the whole battle array, whose invisible leader is Providence. Gluck, this great musician, could not foresee that a day would come when *music drama* would expand its literary claims far more broadly than he would have believed possible. In his works he anticipated – prophetically, as it were – the importance that Scribe and Meyerbeer would place on *situation* in opera, and that Wagner demanded with regard to *character*. He could not imagine that the art of music, progressing along a path that he himself had opened, would, fifty years after his death, inevitably reach the point where it would intimately interweave its existence with poetry. It would link its vocal and instrumental masterworks with those of poetry and literature, it would treat the most beautiful literary creations as scaffolds to be adorned with images, enveloped in gossamer fabrics, and adorned

with flower garlands. Nor could he imagine that this would take place as much on the stage as in the concert hall, in cantatas as much as in song. He was, nevertheless, the harbinger, the glorious herald, of the period which over the past twenty years has grown in fame and produced important proponents.

Equally great as a poet and as a musician, comprehending musical beauty with heart and mind in equal measure, Gluck, to his eternal glory, advanced the poetic development of music toward its next challenge. Toward this end he could not summon forth, as if with a magic wand, all that has in fact already occurred with respect to merging the efforts and creative powers of both art forms. He was determined – first and above all – to create the great declamatory style. And strangely enough, his most direct successor in this genre, the one most thoroughly imbued with his principles, his principal heir in truthfulness of expression (to which he gave a heretofore unimagined radiance) was that genius who appropriated for lyric poetry everything that Gluck had vindicated for musical tragedy: Schubert.

This lineage can be demonstrated in many ways. We promise to deal with this task exhaustively elsewhere; for today we remain satisfied with indicating how we understand the kinship between these two spirits. [Alfred de] Musset calls one of his writings *Un spectacle dans un fauteuil*, a spectacle in an easy chair. We cannot help but think of Schubert in this connection. With him the tiniest of songs often becomes a miniature opera full of tragic and dramatic passion. He often instinctively turns to recitative and, like Gluck, he accentuates every nuance of the poetic idea – often a single prominent word – by means of a corresponding musical expression.

Weber, for his part, is connected to Gluck by delicate, transparent threads, while Spontini, in the most splendid and brilliant fashion, continued the declamatory style, which Méhul and Grétry upheld in their own way in the French school.

On Beethoven's Music for *Egmont*

Whenever art has reached the point where it is destined to undergo drastic transformation, make great progress, and change direction in radical, hitherto unimagined ways, that great moment is usually heralded with meaningful portents. Rarely, however, does mankind divine the prophetic meaning of those signs at the moment they become evident. Rather they are regarded as isolated events, indeed often as anomalous symptoms, as more or less interesting phenomena. Only when the sun of this new day is at its zenith, does one realize that the scattered rays, like dawn's first light, all originated from the same focal point.

Such thoughts and similar ones are aroused these days by a performance of Goethe's *Egmont* with Beethoven's music. We observe here one of the first examples in modern times of a great composer deriving his inspiration directly from the work of a great poet. However uncertain and hesitant Beethoven's first step in this first endeavor may seem to us, it was, in his own time, fearless and significant.

In ancient Greece poetry and music were so closely intertwined that poetry and song meant and were named the same. The epic was organized into *Gesänge*, songs. A kind of indefinable instinct that we find among almost all peoples allowed this identical designation to persist nearly everywhere.⁵ In Greece the nature of language and music determined and required this union. Rhythm detached itself from language and formed the essential element of music. Educated Hellenists assure us that, since time has bequeathed us only the words of the surviving works of Aeschylus and Pindar, we enjoy a mere reflection of their original beauty. Though they fill our minds with astonishment and the keenest admiration, our ears cannot be equally ravished, since not even fragments have survived from which we could reconstruct the quality of the musical dimension of these masterworks on which contemporaries placed so much importance. While there can be no doubt that the art of music contributed mightily to the vivid impact made by the

⁵ The English term "books," however, used to denote the subsections of Homeric epics, does not convey this phenomenon.

poetic geniuses of that period, we can only construct more or less educated, but inescapably dry, conjectures about the music of antiquity.

Sometime later music deteriorated into a kind of barbarism; it took centuries to fashion new forms and a new medium. Dedicated entirely to worship, music discovered noble sounds, which were nevertheless only a kind of babbling in the new language it created for itself. During the Middle Ages music gradually fashioned its idiom; harmony attained solid ground. When music became substantial, well-organized, and sufficiently organic to serve an idea, its expression remained at first exclusively musical; in vocal music written for the opera (not to mention the oddities that history reports about church music) composers expended all their efforts on music per se and were satisfied if its expression and character loosely matched those of the words. A desire for euphonious, poetic verse arose very slowly. If on occasion the poetry's external qualities of rhythm and sonority were joined to beautiful thoughts or lovely images, the happy circumstance was more likely a fortunate discovery than the product of deliberate effort.

The education of musicians was quite limited and they were usually inexperienced in matters beyond the sphere of their art. On the one hand, they were completely preoccupied with learning the skills necessary to master the indispensable, difficult, but quite chaotic mass of knowledge. On the other hand, they were in the grip of a passion that they could only express by musical means. Acquiring those musical means, however, required strenuous mechanical exercise. In consequence musicians were thoroughly absorbed – intellectually, spiritually and in the allocation of their time – in a sea of tones whose turmoil and glories otherwise left room in their thoughts only for the most necessary matters of real life. Over the course of time, as all the accumulated elements of their craft first formed coherent units, then split into different branches and eventually evolved into different styles and genres (knowledge of which was easier to achieve for some and for others became superfluous), musicians increasingly freed themselves from a narrow concern with musical issues alone: they ceased being completely absorbed by them to the exclusion of everything else.

The biased opinion that people of talent and genius cannot exercise their abilities in multiple directions – a notion that finds its popular expression in the saying “*Schuster bleib bei deinem Leisten*” (Cobbler, stick to thy last!) – is not one that we, for our part, deem completely justified. Genius and talent, as special as they obviously are, reveal themselves only in the heads of those

who, aside from their specialty, are well organized. Even when they neglect to apply their abilities to matters other than their proper field, the biographies of famous men give adequate proof that (assuming character failures have not dulled qualities of mind) even the most distinguished specialists have never lacked versatility. Even musicians eventually ceased living inside their ideal world alone. They gradually emerged from the specialization of their art to the point where they could be considered men of sense and intellect even by those who lacked any technical understanding of music. In our own time musicians are no longer considered rare and weird phenomena – half cherubim, who let mortals hear heavenly songs, and half blockheads who are treated in everyday life either ambiguously or with unambiguous contempt. They are recognized, rather, as individuals who fulfill the moral duty to develop their minds thoroughly and who acquire universal and varied knowledge. Some of them even know how to deal with words as adroitly as with sounds.

At the same time music has gradually appropriated literary creations in whatever form. In the theater, in the concert hall, in vocal and instrumental compositions, music now – by means of translation, excerpts, mottos, devices, titles and programs – embraces every sort of literary expression in poetry, drama, or novel. Seeking subject matter, music hardly misses an instant of modern literary life, while also reaching back to earliest antiquity. From the peoples of the Orient as much as those from the North, subjects and colors are wrested to build musical structures. A torrential magnetic current connects the two forms of human thought and feeling: words and music. Admittedly literature still presumes a certain superiority over music and especially over *musicians* but already feels compelled to remind the world noisily of its old privileges. The musical press grows more active and now recruits skillful interpreters. Journalism nowadays finds one of its most fruitful sources in musical polemics; and the representatives of different parties – innovators and reactionaries – forge for themselves well-wrought and finely chiseled weapons. The most direct result of this sudden rise in the intellectual level of musical art, it seems to us, is that henceforth poetic works that hitherto pursued no higher goal than that of matching syllabic sounds to the expression of musical feeling and supplying singable texts for human voices, can no longer satisfy major composers. They now demand more elevated material for their musical creations.

While Schubert turned his genius to what was supreme in German lyric poetry, Beethoven firmly grasped tragedy. Even if the attempt may appear imperfect to us, its effect was more enduring than the groping improvements through which operatic texts developed from their earlier triviality to their current demeanor. Schubert's task in particular was more completely solved than was Beethoven's. Nonetheless, what Beethoven attempted with *Egmont* was an arrow shot straight into the distant future, the importance of which Beethoven could hardly imagine. Wagner is no longer satisfied with claiming only parts of poetic masterworks for music. He asserts for our era a rebirth of Greek drama with new forms and resources, a restoration of that indissoluble, normal union of music and drama, each one benefiting the other, indeed an unavoidable merging of one into the other.

Since, in speaking of *Egmont* we have mentioned Wagner, let us also recall that before he studied music, he had been strongly drawn to drama; he tried to write several tragedies, struggling to follow Shakespearean models. It was, however, a performance of *Egmont* that suddenly revealed to him how the force and power of music could heighten dramatic expression. He decided forthwith to master the art of music in order to present himself as both a poet and a musician. It soon became clear to him that Beethoven had given music too small a role in the drama and had missed its purpose by squeezing all the musical interest into the entr'actes, music to which the public, distracted by anti-musical interests, lends but an inattentive and absentminded ear.

We used the term anti-musical with regard to *Egmont*.⁶ The term is justified because the most striking virtues of the work involve the act of reflection. The Regent, Machiavelli, Alba, William of Orange are the most significant characters of the work and the beauty of their portraits is hardly of the kind that music is attracted to and expects to enhance with its own special brilliance. Apart from the scenes in which these characters appear, the most successful are those in which the poet demonstrates the fleeting illusion that is popularity: less steady than the blade of straw which a drowning man tries to grasp. The essential character of the play is completely political. It does not escape us that the love story interpolated into the drama provides the magnetic power that keeps the work in the repertoire. The power of the love scenes, however,

⁶ Actually, Liszt has not used the term, but proceeds to explain this notion in what follows.

does not justify declaring them the better part of the drama, as do those who confuse the sentimental with the superior. Saint Augustin defines virtue as *moderation and order in love*. Should one not assume that in art *perfection* can be characterized as *moderation and order in beauty*? Now in order to appreciate properly the diverse beauties with which Goethe has designed the political part of his drama, one must be familiar with the history and individuals of that period. Yet this very knowledge makes a love like that between Egmont and Klärchen appear an implacable anachronism within Egmont's life. The wonderful scene in which a young girl admires a handsome count in the full brilliance of his court dress touches us deeply in Walter Scott's novel [Kenilworth], where the modest girl believes she is the sole object of young Leicester's affection. But the difference in age between Egmont and Leicester causes a similar difference in the effect the two love scenes (in the novel and the tragedy) have on the reader or spectator. At the catastrophic end of his life, Egmont could well have had a son of Leicester's age during his love affair with Amy Robsart. Therefore, the love felt by Egmont will always create a painful dissonance in the mind of the historically informed spectator, who asks himself how it was possible for Egmont, a father and husband, to have fallen in love so recklessly without giving even a moment's thought to his own family?

The scenes devoted to the portrayal of the love affair are, in their way, certainly as excellent as the political scenes. It is the combination of the two that disturbs the necessary intellectual harmony. The devoted charm of Klärchen's lover entices us, and we love him no less than her – as long as we see him near her. When he faces Alba and the Duke of Orange, however, this charm vanishes; the traits he exhibits are those of adolescence. If it is distressing to see a fruit worm-eaten before it has reached maturity, or a young man who has lost all belief in human goodness and justice, then it is at least as painful a spectacle to behold the destruction of a *mature* man who retains an unpardonable naiveté – a victim of his own imprudence and blind trust. Egmont, a born hero who dreams of freedom while looking at his Klärchen, seems to us a most immature youth indeed in his guileless inexperience. Nevertheless, the public, satisfied with isolated emotions, is particularly attracted to the love scenes and to the vision in the dungeon, while current performances tend to omit important scenes from the political, i.e., the most significant part of the tragedy, or eliminate entire characters (as was done on the Dresden stage with Margarethe and Machiavelli). Bowing to the majority will, Beethoven, too, disregarded the historical side of the work. The pure and true passion glowing in Klärchen's

heart which finds form in verses predestined for musical expression, electrified Beethoven. So too, perhaps more than anything else, did the theme of devotion to freedom, which surely coincided with the feeling for German national independence that had awoken so vividly in that period and especially in his own heart. This emotion arises particularly in the wonderful final apotheosis of the Overture. By setting these sections to music, Beethoven signaled a new path for art: with a mighty hand he felled the first tree in a virgin forest, removed the first obstacle and was the first to tackle the task. The world paid little attention to this first stroke; but the time had arrived when art was to proceed down this path, and shortly after him the road was cleared and devoid of obstacles.

On Mendelssohn's Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

As inadequate as we may find the role that Beethoven allotted to music in a dramatic work when he linked music, with its emphasis and inherent force of expression, to the tragic situations in Goethe's *Egmont*, he nevertheless attached his name inseparably to Goethe's drama, which is hardly performed anywhere without the enrichment of his vibrant tonal commentary. Instead of being content (as had been the case until then) with lyrical outpourings that were distributed, piecemeal, among different characters and held together by the expedient of dramatic action, he endeavored to unite his own art with what was most significant in the art of drama. Despite his restraint, his attempt to bestow on [the muse of tragedy] Melponeme the power of music was too daring, too decisive, for the critics of the time to recognize the half-heartedness of his effort. What was necessary in the first place was for people competent in the matter to understand and absorb the very idea and its realization; only then was it possible to weigh the pros and cons of its adoption.

Mendelssohn – a less titanic genius than Beethoven, yet a composer endowed with a most gentle, sensitive, cultivated intellect – advanced in his own way the convergence and more intimate fusion of music and literature and guided them both along the same course with a kind of benevolent energy. Mendelssohn's tactful caution with respect to opera was interpreted by musicians at the time as timidity, even weakness; yet, by taking a more successful step along the path chosen by Beethoven, he revealed how much he recognized the importance of that first step. He demonstrated this insight all the more by resisting the provocative, exhilarating desire to turn to opera until he had found in [Emanuel] Geibel a librettist with whom the prospect of cooperation in a shared dramatic creation promised some guarantee of artistic success.

The dramatic material that Mendelssohn chose for musical treatment were works that offered overall a more favorable opportunity for musical treatment than *Egmont* had; moreover, they demonstrate how thoughtfully he proceeded along the path taken by Beethoven. He recognized the significance of the chorus, and, as can be seen in such works as his *Athalia* and *Antigone*, as well as his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, he rejected the pallid sort of subject matter that calls for reflection and needs to be grasped primarily through the intellect.

Mendelssohn's treatment of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers us the experience of one of the most precious, sparkling, and finely worked jewels from Shakespeare's coffer, whose splendor is magnified by everything the music radiates with its delicate glimmer, sublime brilliance and singular glow. By being more deeply absorbed in his subject and by introducing choruses, he succeeded in bursting the narrow boundaries that Beethoven had set in his engagement with drama and achieved something more perfect in this genre. Instead of simply latching on to an established success Mendelssohn brought a new appreciation to a beautiful work of poetry by virtue of his musical interpretation. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to be an unprecedented example of a poetic masterpiece that has found a permanent home in the stage repertory solely owing to its incidental music. This reminds us of a well-known anecdote told about Goethe and Beethoven. When they were out walking together one day, with many people lifting their hats, Goethe complained, "how tiresome it often gets, to be recognized by so many," to which Beethoven answered, not without malice, "perhaps it is I being addressed." In a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we hear Thalia [the muse of comedy] complaining, too, about the burden of having to give thanks for the great display of applause, and then a smiling Euterpe [the muse of music] answering her, "perhaps it is I being addressed."

One cannot mention *A Midsummer Night's Dream* without being amazed by this poetic creation. Shakespeare, whose Cyclops-like hands usually fashion granite, marble and clay into immortal, colossal works, here takes pleasure in weaving a wonderful latticework of the finest filigree, in working finely wrought gilt work into the luster of the most precious mosaic of poetry – little figurines whose principal charm is their utter delicacy. The work affords us one of the finest examples of the capacity of a genius for creating a harmonious whole out of the most disparate elements, for demonstrating how to tease out the most surprising correspondences, equilibrations and relationships, so as to align and join together substances that seem at first to repel each other, which the mind's eye at first experiences as clashing – the term one uses for discordant color effects. When we consider the presence of three completely different plots – all apparently justified and necessary – we encounter at once three elements that are difficult to combine: the sentimental, the fantastic and the comic; three thoroughly dissimilar forms of society: antiquity, the middle ages and the modern period; three thoroughly dissimilar ways of expressing the beautiful: love, imagination and art. All of these multi-colored threads are so ingeniously

interwoven that it would be impossible to pull out a single one from the texture without spoiling the whole.

Emotion is the principal motif informing that part of the action that takes place in antiquity. It does so with exquisite artistic purpose; for truly the behavior of the heart exhibited by these lovers is deeply embedded in human nature, regardless of time, place or custom. Thus does love burn in young hearts in every corner of the world; thus do tenderness, devotion, shame and despondency, anger and jealousy always burgeon forth from the depths of a woman's heart; thus does paternal egotism alongside severity, greed, and ambition flourish in all varying forms of human society.

Imagination develops within the medium most congenial to it, that is, the fairy world – a concept formed in the Middle Ages out of a spontaneous and unexpected blend of the Christian worldview with Northern mythic memories. Ugliness appears in Greek poetry and art only from the combination of features that are not homegrown but rather foreign imports. In the realm of fantasy, however, ugliness assumes an unquestioned place. Humor unhesitatingly allows for it because it enjoys the contrast when an inexplicable magic transforms ugliness before its eyes into inviting objects to fall in love with, not owing to their inherent qualities but rather from an inclination toward variety, multifarious pleasure, strangeness, a disposition that arises in the wake of lovers' vexation, inconstancy or curiosity.

The *comical* is drawn from everyday contemporary life. These poltroon natures – petty, materialistic, crudely and stupidly egotistical, servile in the face of authority and conceited over merits recognized by no one but themselves – are found everywhere and at all times; they thus provide inexhaustible material for comedy. Because such characters are doomed to utter oblivion as individuals, it is essential that they be coated with the veneer of contemporary life. For the comical to be effective, it requires only the most superficial features of society; but they must be current and familiar.

If someone had come up with the idea of joining together three completely unrelated plots, each deriving from entirely different genres and widely spaced epochs, it would have seemed an impossible problem for art to solve. To bring together kings and workmen, to link the affairs of the heart of two harmless pairs of young lovers with the quarrel between two flighty, capricious

and stubborn fairies, to simmer in one pot the Germanic fairy world and the heroic pathos of antiquity, all this might have appeared – prior to its successful execution – as the incarnation of the absurd. But the genius skillfully mixes audacity with moderation and rarely lacks the latter even when the crowd deems his rash flights of imagination reckless. Genius knows how to meld bits and pieces from distant entities, or tone progressions from the most distant keys into a harmonious and organic totality.

Shakespeare already joins the two opposed poles – antiquity and the Middle Ages – by means of delightfully imaginative ties and ribbons: the most finely nuanced gradations of colors, an imperceptible mixing of rose-colored, ether-blue, lilac-colored tints, masterfully constructed transitions and refreshing iterations: He does so by contacts between the kinds of characters most common to the two ages. Goethe, finally [in *Faust II*], shows their encounter in decisive contrasts, in the fully evolved splendor of their brilliance and greatness. But how can one admire the bold conception of this idea, its felicitous execution by the English poet – whom we might imagine peering Janus-like into the depths of centuries – without at the same time noticing the unforgivable anachronism that the German stage commits, when the characters from antiquity are dressed up in costumes from the Middle Ages. No matter how this play may have been performed in Shakespeare's time: given the requirements, customs and technical solutions that stagecraft has developed since, we must not hold to the letter of tradition – we must grasp its spirit. Whatever the reasons that led to the practice originally, Shakespeare, if he could once again walk among us, would certainly and energetically demand the tangible and visible expression of the idea he had in mind when he located the principal intrigue of his play in Greek antiquity. Genius does nothing without reason. Even if the reason remains hidden, wrapped in enigmatic formulas whose meaning is not easily discovered, we must not change one iota of these formulas. However unusual they are, however obscure their meaning, we must nevertheless not add or subtract anything: we must bequeath them unharmed to later times, when such Sphinx-like enigmas will perhaps be resolved. Goethe said that he had smuggled many secrets [“*viel eingeheimnißt*”] into his most sublime work, *Faust*. Every artist, every poet breathes into his work the fragrance of a thought left unexpressed, communicated to the emotions before it can be defined. Let us be careful, therefore, not to destroy, with clumsy fingers, even one atom of the pollen dust, which is part of a spiritual flowering.

Why did Shakespeare choose the very names Athens, Theseus, Hippolita, when he could so easily have replaced them with others? They become like unresolved dissonances if one strips away their proper attributes. Costumes and architectural sets must be made in no other style but the Greek, just as the fairies, for their part must appear in fantastic costumes resembling the shapes of plants and relate to the dress of the time that imagined them. Furthermore, the workers' costumes should match present-day style, since the poet has already indicated, by virtue of their names, that they must be contemporary with present and future audiences. The nuances of different time periods are so apparent to the careful eye that one must not neglect to emphasize them on the stage. And it would be erroneous to pretend that the names Theseus and Hippolita were mere echoes of the mythological traditions of Italian poetry, for Shakespeare never let this tradition overtake common sense (as would have been the case here), had not a compelling idea drawn its rainbow-colored ribbon around all these disparities: had not poetic imagination – the secret mistress who brings order to apparent confusion – wrapped everything in the veil of her magic.

Few human beings are so gifted as to be able to experience the beautiful in its three essential manifestations and, we might say, to put it into practice: in emotions and passions felt in our heart, in poetry and symbolic myth grasped by our mind, in icons and images of man's noblest and best instincts represented and embodied in art. In other words, to love that which transcends mere goodness, to understand poetry, and to create art. *Love, imagination, and art.* Few art forms can portray the feelings and passions as they appear in ordinary life *and* represent them, informed by the shapes which a people's lively imagination has created to represent them *and* show the procedures that art employs to fashion them into its own specifically artistic forms. Shakespeare fused all of these components whose intimate connection lies concealed under an apparent separateness. He portrayed emotion, and particularly love, in its direct impact on the fate of his protagonists by making visible the influence of those mysterious, supernatural beings with which man's *imagination* has forever occupied itself. He blurred all of these contours in the most delicate manner, sketched them in the lightest and gauziest hues. And amid all these portrayals he places, with the most natural and yet surprising nonchalance, the depiction of the clumsy bustle – the raw, unpolished beginnings out of which *art* emanates. Though illustrated here only as it pertains to drama, artists will easily discover a general picture of the bitter, nasty

difficulties which accompany the act of creation, the bringing to light of every work of art. The idea – the poetic intention – must struggle with the craft, and with the practitioners who are expected to bring it to life; artists must fight the obstacles, which the practitioners' inferior nature places in the way, and fashion – amid manifold hardships only they know – the tools they require.

With the utmost discernment, Mendelssohn discovered those places where music, like an invigorating or refining spice, could enhance the appeal of the work as a whole; he gave his own art the most appropriate and well-considered role in the work. The overture, by virtue of its striking originality, the harmonious proportions and melodiousness in its blend of heterogeneous elements, as well as its charm and freshness, is entirely on the level of the play. The chords given to the winds at the beginning and end are like the gentle lowering and rising of eyelids, and between this lowering and rising, a graceful dreamworld of delightful contrasts appears, in which the elements discussed earlier: the sentimental, the fantastic and the comic – each one characterized masterfully – are most delicately and beautifully intertwined. Mendelssohn's talent was completely at home with the cheerful, roguish, enchanted and enchanting atmosphere of Shakespeare's utterly ingenious work. He was well suited to portray those magical fairies and to crash into their caressing, twittering song with the braying of the donkey, yet arousing in us no more discord than we experience when, in elegant, intellectual circles, a two-legged donkey chimes in now and then. No musician was as able as he to translate into music the tender, but somewhat superficial, sentimentality of those lovers, as he accomplished in the third entr'acte with, in effect, a beautifully orchestrated *Song without Words*; or to portray the rainbow-like frothiness, the opalescent glimmer of those little goblins, as well as to render the brilliant pomp of a courtly wedding feast.

The choice of poetic work in this instance was just as characteristic as it was in the case of Beethoven – or, later, Schumann. Schumann's gloomy and dark inclinations, for example, drove him to a subject of restless despair full of enigmatic sadness, one of lofty apprehension alongside superhuman daring. There is a fairy in *Manfred*, too; but she is not a woman who charms with her pouting, her willfulness, a woman who thoughtlessly takes revenge and is unpredictably

unfaithful. Rather, this fairy is *a soul* – a transparent, shimmering soul who exudes devoted grace: who radiates poetry.

Weber, too, for his part, attempted, in his *Preciosa*, one of those proxy marriages between music and drama, in which man and woman encounter each other without yet being one in body and spirit. Despite his intellectual prowess – he was one of the first composers also active in literary matters – he deceived himself, as he had done with *Euryanthe*, in his choice of material. The text for *Preciosa* is a charming sketch, but, like certain lovely little water flowers, it does not survive the day to which it owes its bloom. Had Weber based its attractive music on a stronger foundation, had he imbued a sketch from the hands of Goethe, Shakespeare or Byron with the colors of his elevating music, then *Preciosa* would in fact – and rightfully so – join those increasingly significant attempts that strive to unite great music and great drama.

We should not be flustered, but we must take notice of a noteworthy fact: namely, that the giants of German literature not only misjudge the growing significance of these endeavors but are rather ill disposed and reproachful toward them. Gervinus' historical researches are rightfully counted among the most brilliant trophies of the German spirit, yet his one-sided and deeply prejudicial views on music often get in the way of our admiration for him. He proclaimed a very scornful opinion of Mendelssohn's share in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.⁷ The well-deserved acclaim accorded to this work everywhere must serve as striking counter-evidence to the rather pedantic criticism of the renowned historian. Moreover, one should add that, without Mendelssohn's music, one of the most beautiful flowers in the bouquet adorning Shakespeare's scepter would hardly have become sufficiently accessible to the public for it continue as an eternally fresh mainstay of the repertoire.

⁷ Liszt: We can only compare with this mistake one equally great, namely, that of adding a disturbing musical accompaniment, inopportunistically impeding the rapid course of the action, and interrupting this work of fancy, this delicate and refined action, this ethereal dream, with a march of kettledrums and trumpets, just at the point where Theseus is expressing his thoughts as to the unsubstantial nature of these visions." Gervinus on Shakespeare, vol. 1. [Quoted after G.G.Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, translated by F.E.Bunnett, 2nd edition, London 1875]

Auber's *La Muette de Portici*

La Muette de Portici is one of the first five-act operas which owes its universal European success as much to the fortunate choice of text as its musical quality. As is well known, Italian opera, which exercised a lasting influence on the entire development of dramatic music, has never taken the poetry of *Opera seria* seriously. A few situations that arouse the expression of certain simple, natural, moving, and sensuous affects (at least as they are felt by this fiery people) – love, jealousy, hatred, vengeance, ambition – are enough to satisfy a public that expects the theater to do no more than quench its strong thirst for excitement. Such a public spurns all expressions of thought and reflection to the same extent that the more deeply contemplative Northern character demands them. Historical personages in Italian opera have, of course, no pretensions to historical or local plausibility. They are simply *ladies and gentlemen* animated by emotions that also stir in the hearts and minds of the audience, and which each listener applies to himself without worrying much about the latitude that is allotted to these emotions on the stage. In those countries only scant attention is paid to the transitions that are inevitably required by the action – both to prepare those moments in which the passions erupt to their fullest and to help fill up an entire evening.

In Italy, opera is only about *singers* and *cantilenas*; it would be impossible for the audience to listen for several hours with intense attention. Operas per se are unimportant to them: if an opera succeeds, it is owing to a certain number of pretty melodies, or the presence of some effective musical numbers that make the singers' talents shine. There arose, in contrast to music of this kind, whose exciting appeal, gripping electricity and intoxicating passion are far removed from the more reflective spirit and deeper feeling of the German artistic sensibility, the dramatic-declamatory school of Gluck. Its earnest aspiration was to treat tragic subjects seriously and truthfully, requiring that even knowledgeable and devoted listeners must first collect their thoughts and maintain a congruent mood: to do justice to the intensity of the lofty emotions which Gluck continually and exclusively stirs and to show themselves worthy of them.

Sometime later it was again reserved for Paris to establish an operatic genre which occupied the mind more than did Italian opera; by using interesting subject matter it played more to the imagination, yet did not lift the listener from the ordinary sphere of emotions. To a certain degree

this genre of French opera constitutes a compromise between literature and music. *La Dame Blanche* of Boieldieu, based on a novel, was one of its most successful products. Its subject matter draws on the field of history and in order to lend greater emphasis to this dimension, Boieldieu employed nationalistic rhythms and melodies, elements hitherto ignored. With the sure calculation of a talented professional, he weaved them throughout his work, which turned out a stunning success.

The picturesque subject matter of *La Muette*, set in the picturesque city of Naples, generates contradictory views and passions – a striking peculiarity of this dramatic complex! Conspiracy and uprising, translated from their conventional bombast into the more accessible sphere of popular emotions, aroused the more impressionable part of the audience, while the wretched death of the revolutionary hero, along with the failure of the political movement and the obvious victory of authority caused the more serious part of the audience to smile at such immature enthusiasm. This part of the audience could now comfortably observe – as not posing any danger – how moral madness was justly punished, and how physical insanity could lead to such severe punishment. Without any misgivings, they now abandoned themselves to the enjoyment of this piquant and forceful music, and let the frenzy of the action pass without being perturbed by it.

With respect to both its text and music, *La Muette* is what one could call a lucky hit. But both before and after *La Muette*, Auber wrote several operas in which his talent and style appear worthy of recognition. If this work alone has earned universal applause and is still performed, while his other efforts have gradually disappeared from the stage, the reason can be found in its profusion of picturesque motifs. Without demanding the attentiveness or the reverence owed to true poetry, they please the imagination with a series of interesting events, with the splendor of the scenery and sumptuous décor. To these qualities are joined the color and veneer of the music, which delights us with its originality and coquettishness, and melodies enhanced by rhythms both radiant and captivating.

In considering the general character of this opera's style, one cannot deny that it cuts short-winded and skimpy patterns that lag far behind those of Rossini, whose broader melodic flow often extends to thirty-measure periods. Auber's musical ideas do not lack a certain finesse, but they are aphoristic, broken off, weakly developed, insufficiently connected. In short, we find

here more appearance than content, more tinsel than gold, more capering and bounce than momentum. To mention just some of the most obvious examples: the entire Triumphal March in the fourth act (which also serves as the second theme of the Overture) consists of eight measures of four-four time; four further measures, added on as a second part, are nothing but a simple filler, a common cliché. But the public sees Masaniello on his white horse during these oft-repeating eight measures; it hears these eight measures at changing-of-the-guard ceremonies and during outdoor concerts; and it has danced a quadrille on many a lovely night to these same charming eight measures. The famous Market Scene is similarly based on a dozen measures, as are the two choral prayers (which, incidentally, are quite effective). *Petites causes – grands effets*, says *Voltaire* in relation to historical events. *Auber* seems to have remembered this, for he frequently applies this tenet in his operas. Among the many positive traits of *Auber*'s talent, we wish to note that he knows how to give a most effective and delicate harmonic turn to certain sections of his phrases, in which the interval of the minor sixth or augmented fifth, as well as accented dissonant passing tones, play a leading role. Let us cite specifically Masaniello's farewell as he takes leave of his hut, "Adieu donc, ma chaumière," as well as the two barcaroles from the second and fourth acts. We find in them both ingenious harmonic technique and a more delicate sensitivity than is necessary, strictly speaking, in order to make an effect. We recognize in such details the sensitive artist, and his ability to express emotion. But while we take proper account of these harmonic subtleties, it is equally true that the work abounds in clichés. As much as we gladly applaud the second finale and its successful treatment of the folk element, we cannot listen but with distaste to the finale of the third act, "Courons à la vengeance." What is it other than porters and *lazzaroni* [the poor and beggars of Naples] screaming? What is it other than a choral tumult without motif or melody? If one were to compare this finale, for example, with the rebels' chorus ["Enchaînons, frappons les victimes"] from [Spontini's] *Ferdinand Cortez*, then it would be difficult not to wax indignant over how carelessly *Auber* daubed a mere stage decoration while having in front of him so noble a fresco.

Scribe has been reproached for following too closely in his literary work La Rochefoucauld's maxim, "It is not enough to possess great qualities, one must also make use of them sparingly." It is said that he made sure not to waste several ideas on one play and – in the end – constructed whole plays out of a half or a quarter of an idea. *Auber* dealt with his melodic ideas so

economically that, in surveying his numerous operas (in which the equivalent of Scribe's so-called *dialogue vif et spirituel*, peppered with a bit cayenne, is never lacking), one certainly understands why whole operas, which at most have sufficient content for a single act – sometimes even for just one scene – could not survive on the stage for very long, even though they may have left behind a pleasant memory, mostly thanks to one fortuitous moment – a kind of operatic punch line. *La Muette* indeed contains the most genuine substance; it is his most conscientious work. But the musical capital with which his rather easy conscience endowed the work would not have sufficed to gain such popularity if the choice of subject had not been so fortunate.

It is obvious that it was mainly the subject matter that contributed so appreciably to the quick and resounding success of the opera. Even Rossini – he, whose brow was adorned by rich laurels – deigned to covet a similar success. Soon after *La Muette* came *William Tell*. While its libretto may seem deficient, according to the expectations of our time, it nevertheless sought to satisfy those requirements of tragedy that Gluck and Spontini had striven for in their works, and which had become established in French opera. The Italian master aimed to create a work in a form foreign to his own country. And he succeeded. From the start *La Muette* admittedly had the advantage, as it does today, of being more popular. Who does not sing the refrain of the Fisherman's Barcarole? What orchestra does not play the overture with its final march whistled by every traveling salesman? What audience has not taken delight in the Market Scene and danced a quadrille to its melody? What theater does not fancy itself able to stage it, no matter how well or badly. Still, no musician would bother to lodge a protest against a middling performance, for he well knows that the piece is not being performed for him, the musician, but for his neighbors to the right and left.

The fate of Rossini's *Tell*, the greatest work of the great master, was altogether different. When it first appeared, it was almost completely misunderstood. An extraordinarily gifted singer, [Gilbert-Louis] Duprez, had to discover in it an aria which emphasized the marvelous resources of his exceptional voice in order to entice the crowd, which showed up again and again for the sake of the famous chest voice high C (*ut de poitrine*) and simply put up with the rest. Fortunately, this allowed for the passage of time necessary for the work to be properly understood and appreciated until, little by little, it was fully comprehended. *William Tell* does not

appear on as many stages as *La Mulette*; but wherever it is performed it attests to a judicious approach to art and any music lover and connoisseur will gladly seek out a performance, knowing that it is given for his sake.

Scribe's and Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*

Gluck had composed the majority of his operas before he introduced an epoch-making new declamatory style in his last great works, thereby achieving immortality. Similarly, *Robert* is not Meyerbeer's first work. Prior to *Robert* he had composed a number of operas, which, although positively received at the time (especially *Marguerite d'Anjou* and *Il Crociato*), were overshadowed by the success of *Robert*. Genius, before it has given proof of its existence, resides latently in those upon whom nature has conferred it. To make itself known completely, however, Genius requires a form that conforms to the artist's distinct character; experience shows that he does not always immediately find it. That form must correspond to his hidden and often misunderstood inclinations, if it is to attain the definitive expression of the richness and freedom of his creative power. Meyerbeer searched in vain for this form in Italian opera as it then existed – the style he cultivated in his earliest works. This genre had culminated with Rossini, *il maestro di color que sanno* [the master of those who know]. Bellini and Donizetti, as epigones and popular representatives of purely sensuous melody, could only find a place in the second rank; Meyerbeer, however, had every right to claim a place in the front. Once he had finally perceived, after many attempts, the futility of reaching this goal, he indeed chose an entirely different terrain: he initiated a brilliant period in opera through his alliance with a poet whose special gifts agreed in the most fitting way with his own talent.

We can only briefly indicate several facts necessary to characterize this development, to explain the influence exerted by the alliance of these two talents, and to point out the reasons for their appearance and the consequences that ensued. Given these limitations, we can only dwell on those names who proved decisive in the matter. The experts will then easily determine what place is to be accorded the hybrid works and authors who shape the necessary transition from one period or school to the next. These works mix – in different proportions and according to their particular inspiration – the colors of the vanishing period with the traits of the coming one, until the latter become more visible.

Among all of those who in the last [18th] century rhymed operatic texts, there is one who, by virtue of his importance and copious output, has earned the status of poetic celebrity – a status we must deem justified, even if our present taste finds little to enjoy in the qualities for which he was honored in his own time: Metastasio. Endowed with genuine poetic talent for the expression of tender emotions and without equal in the honey-toned lilt of his verses, he sought in his dramatic poetry no more than the opportunity to put into the mouth of the protagonists expressions sympathetic with his own nature, in a language full of noble grace, and enveloped in a euphony so deeply in sympathy with music that it made melody come forth as if through loving sighs. He was the poet *par excellence* of that type of Italian opera, which Hasse exemplifies most clearly. Although not the most productive musical creator of his time (for there were those who brought forth operas by the hundreds), he nevertheless composed over fifty. This should not surprise us when we consider that at that time every composer, and Hasse in particular, considered it a matter of course to compose several operas on the same text and, conversely, to use the same music for different texts. We mention this fact intentionally: as striking evidence of the complete indifference toward the *effects* that were suitable for different situations. Effects, after all, cannot be transferred from one situation to another, whereas the same feelings can be expressed in a hundred different ways both poetically and musically. One can easily change the melody to certain words and, conversely, the words to a given melody – as long as both partake only of a very general notion of joy, grief or love, while scant importance is given to declamation or prosody, the elements that create the sole indissoluble bond between words and their musical expression. Consequently, one can rightly argue that during this first period in the history of opera *emotion* dominated above all. It would hardly be worthwhile to examine in what respect various individual librettos veer from the exclusive dominance of sensibility or sentimentality, but there is no denying the fact that Metastasio should be considered the most outstanding product of this period, when the text that serves as a pretext for the music required only a motivated stringing together of several persons in different vocal registers who delighted and enchanted by means of a kind of luxurious twittering based on rhyme and rhythmic verse.

The society whose favorite poet was Metastasio and whose favorite composer was Hasse had disappeared by the beginning of this [19th] century. Its complete transformation brought about the need for another art form. In Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Zauberflöte* new elements are

already noticeable. Tragic terror alternates with comic scenes, apparently to avoid the monotony of sentimental bombast and pomposity, which at the time were inseparable from *opera seria*. Once the signal had been given, one sought out everything that could heighten operatic texts and impart a certain *haut goût* piquancy, while the strict difference between *opera seria* and *buffa* was blurred in favor of *opera mezzo carattere*. Nonetheless, one chose, almost at random, subjects that could be expanded, varied, embellished and fitted out with coincidences, without, however, confidently foreseeing success, since the means for creating effects had not yet been discovered and could not be applied with any certainty. With regard to subject matter: once antiquity was exhausted, one exploited the Middle Ages, then novels, then poetic narrations of modern history all the way to mere anecdotes without observing any kind of system. Such inconsistency is typical for transitional works, which, having distanced themselves from the older forms, do not yet carry the marked stamp of the new.

When Scribe wrote *Robert* for Meyerbeer, it became apparent that the conception of operatic subjects had entered a new period, one completely replacing the old one. Henceforth, the creation of significant works based solely on older methods was no longer possible. This change took already place during the lifetime of Rossini, the greatest of those who had glorified the old method. This sparkling, easygoing, capricious, indolent, ironic, sarcastic, perspicacious soul retreated without even trying to fight against the new force that had emerged. He had not been at a loss for an answer to the success of *La Muette*: he created his *William Tell*. But after the success of *Robert*, he left Paris: he, the immortal head of a school, which, as he quickly grasped, had this time received a blow that eventually would prove fatal. He had not balked at devoting himself to the composition of a grand opera – seriously and with conscientious attention – even though he was little used to it, having until then just followed his inspiration like the birds of heaven. But he could not bother himself to wrest from his easy, *bonne fille* [good girl] Muse the required elements that the new school had taught the public. An artist by the grace of God, as carefree about art as about fame, Rossini never considered wracking his brains in order to tease out the subtleties a given subject might be capable of, to wring from it all the developments, to forcibly extract from it all the tragic moans and sudden laughter, to knead and massage it a hundred times until he had wrested from it another surprising, unexpected, ingenious or bizarre trait.

Mere sensuous splendor, along with the effective expression of specific emotions in arias, duets or finales (which contributed little to the dramatic momentum) ceased to be the principal foundation of an opera. Now one demanded *situations*. This element of dramatic interest was not completely unknown: one had already striven after it, albeit instinctively. The inauguration of a new period in opera with Scribe's *Robert* and Meyerbeer's musical conception of it did not introduce anything unknown or unprecedented. Neither in art nor in nature does a genre exist all by itself: it is bound up, by means of chain links and intervening gradations, with genres that are contrary and completely different with respect to form and substance. Librettists had already been mindful of situations and enhancing superficialities. The jaw of hell and the whole course of *Don Giovanni*, the blown-up fleet in *Cortez*, the anvil and hammer chorus from *Alcidor* [both by Spontini], the fire-spouting Vesuvius and the tumultuous scenes in [Auber's] *La Muette de Portici*, the people's uprising and the glowing Alps in *William Tell*, the terror of the Wolf's Glen in *Freischütz*, the moonstruck, bloodthirsty *Vampyr* [Marschner] – all steered toward this goal. But Scribe surpassed all that by (logically and decisively) asserting as essential what until then had been regarded as secondary. With the success of *Robert* and conscious of a newly discovered method, one became occupied exclusively with its application; and Scribe climbed to the pinnacle of success by surpassing all the groping attempts of his predecessors by endowing opera with a newer, richer, more diverse focus of interest than what had been its principal attraction, its quintessence, for so long.

The splendor of the decorations, the luxury of scenic furnishings, the extraordinary ballets, the magical machinery – in short, all those visual glories – ceased to be mere bonuses that theaters contrived according to their means. Instead, they became an integral component, an organic element of each work by serving as a way to heighten the interest, the importance, the pictorial effect of each situation. This increasingly necessitated the deployment of as yet unheard means in orchestra and chorus, their manifold combinations and heightened effects, in order not to be crushed or relegated to second rank by the dominant attraction that the scenic opulence must have exercised on the public. From that point on every opera had to contain some sort of grand spectacle at the tensest, most poignant moment, as a kind of situational punch line. Upon the dance of the ghosts in *Robert* there followed the throng of horses in *La Juive*; bathing nymphs were not so much illuminated as overshadowed by an electric sun. And since then, the marvelous miracles of the *wandering Jew* [*Le Juif errant* by Scribe and Halévy] and the wonderful fables of

the *prodigal son* [*L'enfant prodigue* by Scribe and Auber] appear to have almost exhausted the imagination of the set designers. As a man of talent Meyerbeer did not limit himself to half measures: he seized upon the situation wherever he could get hold of it, and – not at all shying away from the absurd – he won the game. His name will be inseparable from what we call the second period of opera: a period apparently less fruitful but – due to the inherent worth of its accomplishments – far more important than the first, whose poetic exponent we saw in Metastasio.

Metastasio's poetic works (which made an impression upon an era and upon a courtly society marked by vapid, effeminate customs) live in a realm of artificiality, though not without a certain poetic veneer. Tasso's *Aminta* had already been there first: arduous love hiding behind artificial naiveté, forced simplicity, the pretense of innocence, short-winded, bubbling passion, purity mixed with the refinement of degeneracy. Scribe, on the other hand, belongs to an era in which exaggeration in literature was the order of the day. Romanticism was in full bloom and nearing its apex. The influence of Byron and [E.T.A.] Hoffmann on the majority of poetic productions of that era in French literature is obvious. Frightening ghosts, horrible apparitions were in vogue. Poets sought the eccentric, and the public devoured it ravenously. The most extreme contrasts were hardly sufficient to make the class of readers and spectators, spoiled by horror stories, shiver in terror. Victor Hugo created chaste courtesans, self-sacrificing mothers and brewers of poison all in one person [Lucrece Borgia]. [Charles] Nodier countered with his [Jean] *Sbogar*; the beautiful countesses and duchesses adored the hero in Eugène Sue's *La Salamandre*; and none of them withheld their applause from [the actress Marie] Dorval in Dumas's *Antony*. One demanded exaggeration at any price. Hatred and love, danger and unending happiness, light and shadow were juxtaposed in screaming clashes. In order to satisfy these pressing demands of breathless hearts, in order to add some spice to the usual plotline – the fate of two lovers – Scribe, without further ado, turned Satan himself into a tender father. Times change. Today it would be difficult to present so sentimental a devil. During the period in which *Robert* appeared, however, this very extravagance created its success.

Art is not absolute. Music, especially – which is frequently compared to architecture – cannot be judged, any more than architecture, without considering the style to which its works belong. It

would be neither fair nor show knowledge or true insight if one judged a musical work without considering the period and the medium in which the composer created it, any more than those who render a judgement can ignore the medium or period in which they themselves live. Every period and medium bring forth an ideal, which the greatest artists of their time search and strive for and always deem the most perfect. And never does such an ideal lack a poetic spark, which the genius or talent is able to set ablaze. If a form has lost its magic, works in that form often encounter a sudden resentment, just as their accord with the taste of earlier times redounded to their advantage. But whatever form the works may belong to, they can outlive it as long as they contain a spark of the eternal fire of art and can thus demand humanity's esteem. But, as we have already said, it is necessary to consider the time and the medium of such works in order to truly grasp their importance: to comprehend the rise of the form in its time, to explore whether it was an advance over earlier forms, to perceive the progressions through which it gradually evolved.

When Metastasio and Hasse conferred the brilliance of their talent on that first form of opera, it was still far from having reached its zenith and was still awaiting its greatest genius in Rossini. He summed up – with hitherto unequalled success – the epoch in which melody and feeling alone had ruled in opera, and which continued to exist for so long in Italy. The demands of Rossini's times were not so high that he would have been pressed to unite his fame with that of a brilliant poet. On the contrary: he could create some forty works without posterity feeling any obligation to remember a single one of his librettists. Admittedly, in *William Tell* he leans on the name of [Victor-Joseph Etienne de] Jouy]; but we have observed that this was his last and only composition in which he paid homage to a new era and its demands. The success of *Robert* marks the moment when the creation of an opera resulted from a more balanced cooperation and shared effort by poet and musician than had ever occurred until then. Henceforth it became impossible to compose an opera without attaching decisive importance to the choice of subject and the manner of its treatment.

Love was now granted only an episodic place, in order to escape the sphere of simple, personal feeling, as well as to multiply the dramatic motives, to introduce richer scenic materials and to use them in the interest of copious unanticipated situations. Meyerbeer led the subsequent phase of opera to its final stage after it had gradually expanded over the course of nearly fifty years in France and Germany. In this form, combinations of musical effects replaced simple melody, and

situations took precedence over the *expression of feeling*. In consequence, Meyerbeer's name is indelibly bound up with that of Scribe.

If we now take offense at the excesses this direction has taken, it is because this conception has become foreign and inadequate to the completely different poetic ideal of our generation. That conception, however, had sensed true thoughts along with vague assonances and consonances of feelings and ideas hidden beneath the excesses of Romantic form and under the improbabilities amassed in seeming chaos. At that time every poetic mind had a kind of divinatory instinct for such covert webs of ideas; and by identifying them, they gladly tolerated the guise that was popular at the time. For the sake of the idea hidden behind it, hard-to-please *individuals* gladly welcomed the peculiar mask; and the *multitudes*, as usual, were amused by its grimaces.

It occurred to no one at the time to find Scribe's Satan absurd. This replica of the old legend was seen as one of the various forms of the eternal struggle between Ahriman and Ormuzd, [the forces of good and evil in Zoroastrianism], whose supreme and eternally admirable incarnation is given voice in the trio in the last act ["Que faut-il faire? A tes lois je souscris d'avance."] A certain philosophical, world-weary bitterness endowed evil with the form closest to the mindset of that epoch. Text passages like "Fortune, on your caprices I trust my fate," "Wine, gambling and women I love" from "Versez à tasses pleines," as well as their striking melodies popularized musical numbers well suited to the epicurean temperament and the hollowness of a sensual egotism: all the more so since that egotism – owing to the representation of Hell from which it issues – was branded and anathematized as hellish. The legend, tailored to the magic of Parisian *grand opéra* with its marvels and prominent horrors, nevertheless preserved the religious dimension, which, amidst the most curious variations, remains its fundamental feature. If the appearance of the lascivious infernal nuns is, to us now, an almost repellent image, the public at that time was seized with horror when it followed upon the gloomy invocation of the Prince of Darkness.

After the team of Scribe and Meyerbeer had visibly and tangibly established the fundamental element indispensable for success in their time, one demanded to have situations at any price and often pushed everything else aside for their sake. The more such situations were introduced in unexpected, sudden, novel or moving ways, the more other dramatic and aesthetic considerations had to be violated. It could not be otherwise. The truthfulness and relevance of characters often

were disregarded, and great harm was done to their representation and development – although not as thoroughly as they are chided for nowadays. Men of refined intellect and tact such as Scribe and Meyerbeer may well have emphasized one dramatic ingredient of opera as the principal component necessary for achieving their goal, but they did not sacrifice the others as completely as was the case with their lesser imitators. Scribe and Meyerbeer did not underestimate the value of the other levers of dramatic interest; and one can argue that they ignored them only when absolutely necessary in order to follow the principle they had laid down: namely, to place the greatest importance on the number and strangeness of the situations. We are aware that Robert's character lacks all autonomy, Isabella's is colorless, Bertram's is falsely drawn; [in *Le Prophète*] the prophet is incorrectly conceived, Bertha is a complete nonentity, and Fides misses the mark.

On the other hand, when – as a counterweight to the feverish savagery of the man carried away by impetuous, degenerate inclinations – Scribe transferred the feminine power from the beloved to the sister, he created, in Alice, a genuine character. One has to admire the purity, the devout courage, of this country girl – a shepherdess like the patroness of Paris, St. Genevieve, who speaks of heavenly things with all the more wisdom and authority as she is a stranger to the world and its snares, from which she wants to free the son of her benefactress. She desires this not out of the selfishness of love, but out of divine compassion and childlike obedience. This Alice – this poor, helpless maiden, who, against the powers of hell and of the world, true to her duty and to her god, disputes the devil's right to a soul – has an allure that demands our respect. Marcel, in *Les Huguenots*, shows us the emotion in rugged form; Alice represents its graceful side. In Marcel we encounter the nobility of fanaticism, the heroism of conviction, the unbending will of an iron-hard soul, against which the storms of a burning religious war rage in vain. Raoul and Valentine are lovers full of passion, and their passion is a noble one. Love and duty struggle in both of them; their love grows with the horror of the danger in which it was first revealed; and faith transfigures their love. If one reproaches the poet for constantly striving after situations, it would be unfair to ignore how moving these often can be. It is admirable how, in the fourth act of *Les Huguenots*, two characters unfold in the most crucial hour. While the fears for a beloved put an end to a woman's reserve, her timidity and misgivings and elicit a confession of her love, the man's spirit rises to heroism: Sacrificing his happiness at the very moment he is at its cusp,

he rushes off to battle. Both characters show in their own way the courage of an intense passion. Valentine sacrifices honor to love, Raoul love to honor.

In the first act of *Le Prophète*, too, one cannot escape the impression produced by the entrance of the three gloomy, sinister men who, like scourges of God, promise imminent vengeance to the country folk still trembling under the oppression of brute force. When a mother had obeyed her solemnly crowned son, how much more majestic does she appear to us, when she commands him to lay down the crown, demanding from him both obedience and filial reverence.

The brilliant union of Scribe and Meyerbeer naturally drew the attention of dramatists to the means of their success. One hastened to imitate them, to puzzle out their miracle drug and make use of it. Even the Italian masters, the representatives of ingratiating melody, responded to these new demands placed on operatic subjects. Bellini, Mercadante, Donizetti, Verdi searched for their material in Shakespeare, Schiller, Hugo, or demanded from their librettists – for example, Donizetti in *La Favorite* – a similar dramatic tension by means of unusual templates of the kind that had brought success to Scribe and Meyerbeer. In France one turned to Scribe himself. He accomplished for others what he had for Meyerbeer. But Meyerbeer will remain the representative, the typical musician of this school; for owing to the nature of his talent, he alone knew how to identify with Scribe's principle and to produce the effects that music could wrest from the application of similar dramatic principles. This writer could be fully understood only by a musical genius who was as conversant with explorations and effects in acoustics, instrumentation, harmony, with the exploitation of mass or detail, and with the combinations thereof, as was Meyerbeer. He fully shared Scribe's preference for artificial or brilliant, dazzling, enchanting, dizzying effects; he was just as keen on violently opposing contrasts, unexpected antitheses, garish inconsistencies, and used fake gold, so to speak, in order to provide music with resources that hitherto had been unknown to it and that were meant to enable music to transfer onto opera the virtues – and deficiencies – of contemporary romantic drama.

For twenty years this double reign enjoyed the sympathetic admiration and respect of artists and of a public that was quickly and forcefully initiated into an understanding and appreciation of the real and affected beauties of their creations. In the era of Metastasio, it was simply advantageous to set a work of his to music, but Scribe made himself indispensable to his times. Until then it

had been a matter of luck if a composer found librettos like those for *Don Giovanni*, *Der Freischütz* or *Norma* (in which latter opera Romani accomplished something as outstanding for Bellini as Kind had done for Weber). From then on, even the best music could no longer dispense with the thread of an interesting or striking libretto, i.e., a drama of situations, which unfortunately often degenerated into a *pièce à tiroirs*⁸. When a talent exerts all his strength to achieve a certain goal, he so completely exhausts the necessary means of success, that after him hardly any gleanings are left. After inventing the texts for Meyerbeer according to their jointly held principle, Scribe could hardly do anything else but imitate himself; and other writers were compelled all the more to follow in his tracks.

It would be unfair to deny that they both took a giant step toward uniting the poetic and musical requirements of the stage. However, in other respects this union was still to be achieved more fully and completely. What things in this world approach perfection without traveling the road thereto step by step and passing through all the preparatory phases? The development of art as well as its continuous manifestation demand – just like that of the least plant – that it passes through all stages of its existence which indeed form the conditions for the newest and most recent. Today, when a new generation demands from the opera – which it justly dubs *music drama* – a yet more satisfactory merging of poetry and music than has been accomplished by Scribe and Meyerbeer, we ask whether without the experiments of those two masters one could even have raised these demands; whether the brilliant success with respect to music and libretto that had been achieved in a few well-received works prior to Meyerbeer (but which were carried out without any conceived plan, desired goal, or fixed system) would ever have led to the aesthetic conclusions derived from Meyerbeer's works, namely: that the time had come for operatic texts to adopt more elements from tragedy or spoken drama than had hitherto been the case (with the necessary changes, of course); that, in order to heighten the interest of a situation, one can introduce the full splendor of scenery without jeopardizing the indispensable poetic traits of the drama. Let us not forget that it would have been difficult to formulate such axioms if their starting point had not been the goal that Meyerbeer had reached with such brilliance and glory.

⁸ Literally, a piece from the drawers. French derogatory for a drama of many, often barely related episodes.

The history of art teaches us that every movement ends due to the same principle that gave it life in the first place. Its flowering lasts only until it has developed the last consequence of this principle. Thereafter new ideas unfold, sprouting from the same trunk – a second generation, in effect. These ideas then seize the initiative of progress and proceed until they displace those of the preceding school – after it has spoken its last word. From the expression of *feeling* one turned toward the striving after *situations*. Now that the interest in situations has been exhausted, one has begun to attach it to *characters*. In his libretti for Meyerbeer, Scribe sought only to create a great number of interesting situations – to the disadvantage of both plausibility of the action and interest in the *characters*.

This weakness disturbed a poetic genius who sensed this gap in the structure of the musical drama, only to fill it creatively and forcefully in his own works. And if the criticism of his opponents made a point of showing the *characters* of his poetry in an unfavorable light, we regard this as the very proof for our contention: for we find no earlier example where the poetic significance of the characters in a libretto had been seriously examined. At most critics busied themselves complaining about implausibilities or criticizing situations; but no critic ever thought of closely analyzing the general attitudes of operatic characters.

Wagner recognized that if one's only concern was with the invention of compelling situations one easily fell into the danger of putting tragic beauties and necessities in second place, whereas situations arise naturally from the portrayal of characters and their interactions. Unlike Scribe, Wagner was not intent on lining up one situation after another as external incidents or circumstances. He let them issue from the passions surging in the human breast: from the feelings that define human beings, from the nature of their joys and pains. In the first scene of *Tannhäuser*, the will of one man alone – wrestling himself free from one feeling and taking refuge in another – is enough to cause a miracle.

The Wagnerian school, more securely anchored in his artistic activity than in his theoretical works (although his literary pen has contributed much to obliterating antiquated prejudices), is still too young to let us form an opinion about its future, or to surmise in what virtues its greatness lies, or which errors will necessitate its transformation. For art never rests but inhabits certain forms like mere tents, which one erects and takes down on the path toward the ideal. But since the rise of this school, we can truly state that it has now become as impossible to create –

and to succeed with – works of lasting viability composed in the manner of Scribe and Meyerbeer, as it was to create operas after the appearance of *Robert* according to the prevailing older form. The foremost condition for the perfection of tragedy, namely the portrayal of characters, will hereafter apply to musical drama as well. The representation of characters, transplanted into the realm of music, makes the rebirth and creation of a declamatory style absolutely necessary. Character, in addition to action, manifests itself on the stage through words. That is why Wagner attaches such extraordinary significance to the intrinsic poetic beauty of the libretto.

Gluck conferred on dramatic music all the brilliance, splendor and importance of the declamatory style, while Piccinni held fast to the older way of thinking, whose principal doctrine held that melody alone sufficed for the expression of feeling. While this opinion cannot be entirely refuted, Piccinni forgot that a feeling can be poetically concentrated into a thought, whose exquisite sound and declamation expresses it at a higher degree of intensity. He failed to realize that the matter at hand was to take possession of poetic thought in the realm of music. The time had come when music had to take this step forward; and in spite of the almost constant advantages that Piccinni achieved over Gluck in the heat of battle, it was the latter who remained lord of the battlefield. If in the course of time Gluck's fame increased in estimation while that of his opponent lost brilliance, the victory was more proclaimed than achieved. Gluck triumphantly planted the flag of principle, and the path first laid out by him was widened by brilliant composers who followed his lead. The majority, however, was barely affected by this new form. They admired it, but this admiration was in many cases decreed from on high; in other cases it was brought about by secondary matters⁹ – but the crowd did not embrace this form. The principle bore down like a conqueror, and so it was respected – but with a certain reserve. Then, like a meteor, Rossini appeared; and all sympathies – especially those of the elegant world, which for a long time had set the tone in these matters – surrounded the swan of Pesaro with undivided devotion.

In effect, Meyerbeer arrived at the moment when the melodic and declamatory styles opposed each other like two powers, each one rich in titles and rights, in leaders and partisans. He attempted a compromise between the two. Although he put an end to the old form of *opera seria*

⁹ Liszt: Specifically in *La Vestale* by Spontini and Weber's *Freischütz*.

once and for all, he found the cult of stereotypical melody in the *Théâtre Favart* still so much in bloom that he deemed it advisable to negotiate with this power: to cede it the necessary place in his works by joining or marrying it to the declamatory style – admittedly with obvious modifications. He allocated power to both, but nonetheless allotted a valuable share of his works to the declamatory style. By means of this partial adoption, this mixture, Meyerbeer was more dangerous to the successors of Piccinni than if he had completely excluded their principle. The shining star of Italian opera, with which Meyerbeer had trouble competing when *Robert* appeared, has, since then, paled noticeably. At this very moment one can say that the renown of this kind of theater is like a wick about to die out. After all, during the course of this current winter season a brilliant Parisian critic has remarked that its days are numbered, pointing out that three things are necessary for a theater to exist: a repertory, performers and a public. Nowadays, he claims, the Italian opera lacks composers who know how to write, singers who know how to sing and a public that knows how to listen – a thesis that may sound paradoxical, but one that he develops astutely and convincingly. As further proof one can point out that Italian singers, given a free hand – as in London and Petersburg – are attempting to maintain a last glimmer of glory by appearing in Meyerbeer’s operas, while previously their entire tradition was so exclusively Italian that twenty years ago the prophesy of such a fact would not have been believed. The reputation of Italian opera has been ruined by Parisian *grand opéra*, which, under Meyerbeer’s auspices, has demanded an innovative construction of operatic librettos and has spread the taste for and the understanding of the declamatory style, without which pure melody seems shabby and dry, especially since Rossini has stopped working and all of his followers have failed to match the passionate fire and strong craftsmanship of the master.

By clearly shaping and developing the characters of his protagonists, Wagner excludes the specific melodic principle more fully than does Meyerbeer. Indeed, he uses it even less than Gluck – provided that the label “melody” is withheld from melodic motifs that are treated in a declamatory, particularly dramatic, fashion.

The expression of feeling, the striving after situations, and the representation of character are, in our opinion, the defining traits of the three epochs that opera has been passing through. Each style change has enriched opera with a new aspect without discarding the earlier ones. The striving after situations does not preclude the expression of feeling, no more than the description

of character prevents the creation of situations or the expression of feeling. The majority of those who have bestowed their unstinting admiration on the most developed form of opera – and rightly so – find themselves quite naturally in the situation of wanting to erase everything that has gone before and, in particular, to judge severely the very phase against which they still fight. Nevertheless, this phase rightly claims our sincere attention and even our diligent study. To its disadvantage, the epoch whose intellectual demands corresponded to this phase, is not yet distant enough to be a part of history (as is the case with the end of the last [18th] and the beginning of the present [19th] century). Only those around forty years old today can remember the intellectual atmosphere of those times and recall the general mental state that brought forth that genre of poetic and musical literature – the state that caused and conditioned the excesses, as one would have to call them, of ideas, performances and conceptions. But the younger champions who rally around the new banner do not take into consideration the heated conditions or the moral temperature in which those creations came into flower – whose deficiencies displease them so much as to make them misjudge their beauties. This is the inherent ingratitude of every period of progress and reform: an ingratitude which – despite all improvements and perfections – naturally emerges amidst the necessary harbingers and unavoidable preparations.

If Rossini were informed about the present artistic movement in Germany, he would no doubt smile in amusement and stretch out in his comfortable armchair, happy in his *dolce far niente* and, and with keenly intelligent eyes would listen to the tale of one of the rarest examples in the history of art: That of an artist who has seen disappear not only his school but that which followed and overtook it, yet never outlived his fame.

Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*

This opera was once again presented on our stage in order to honor a singer who wished to appear as a guest in several roles and to make her debut in the role of Romeo. The choice of Romeo as a debut role is not rare; in fact, many German singers use it as a showpiece, although for some time now it has become overworked and threadbare. This fact seems to us one of the clearest symptoms of the exclusive importance that theater establishments place on financial ventures to the great detriment of the requirements and interests of art, and, above all, at the expense of the operatic repertoire. It might be discouraging for artists who strive to win more room for true art on the stage that the work now before us continues to be a kind of divining rod for the box office, while all musically educated people, including orchestral musicians and singers, consider it but an outdated example of an outmoded school. But they also know that art has an irresistible inner power – once the hour of progress has struck – that enables it to clear away the overgrowth and weeds from its path and to make it fertile, without allowing personal whim or incompetence to stand in its way.

It would seem odd that one of the weakest works of Bellini perseveres in Germany, and that a majority of female singers are afflicted with the obsession of making their debut as Romeo, if one did not know that quite recently a justly famous singer¹⁰ chose to *glorify* herself in this role in all of her guest appearances throughout Germany, and that she kept it permanently in the repertoire of her home theater.¹¹ The male costume suits her figure; the role highlights the best registers and the powerful sound of her voice and it comes easy to her, without necessitating much studying, vocal exercises or dramatic excitement. Does it take more to convince all the prima donnas that they, too, when strutting about in such a costume would create a great effect – even if their talent, figure and appearance were ill-suited for this role? One could foresee that it was inevitable that many of them – unawares – would expose themselves to genuine ridicule in order not to lag behind the triumphs of a famous name. It is true that the part is particularly flattering to voices that have become tired and uncomfortable in the high registers but have

¹⁰ The mezzosoprano Johanna Wagner, niece of Richard Wagner.

¹¹ The Ballenstedt castle theater in Saxony-Anhalt.

retained some freshness in the lower range. It is also true that the public finds it quite comfortable seeing and hearing what they have heard once before and more or less enjoyed, without having to think seriously about art. The public will readily smile at a raven when it has just been shown a peacock; it will be in rapture about the twitter of a bullfinch if he perches on the tree where the nightingale sang.

Such a state of affairs is striking and deplorable in Germany, an artistically literate country. Among those who seek to preserve this situation – in a different way but for the same reason – the famous artists deserve to be blamed first and foremost. Miserably wasting their efforts on unworthy projects, they keep works in the repertoire that are either no longer worthy of being there – or never were in the first place. The greatest share of the blame obviously falls on them, since they continue to earn cheap success through the misuse of real talent. By helping to reduce art to a mere diversion for idlers and by letting themselves be admired, applauded and paid for productions which disdain the Muse of serious art, they lower themselves from the rank of artists to that of tricksters. Less blame falls on second rank talents who lack the courage to overcome mistaken prejudices, to shake off the yoke of imitation and to choose roles for themselves that better suit their own abilities and interests. These lesser artists should assert their own individualities; they would be displaying their individual assets in a better light if they scrupulously avoided imitating famous artists and thereby provoke comparisons that can only redound to their disadvantage. That is, they would be well advised not to slavishly move in established tracks.

Alas, it would be asking the impossible to demand the audacity of initiative – the exclusive property of excellent minds – from ordinary human beings, even though its absence harms their own interests, properly understood. While many female singers have precious little sensitivity and feeling for that which is beautiful and appropriate in their profession – which, unfortunately, they often debase to the level of a job – and, while relying on famous but bad examples, give in to their errors of judgment with a certain commercial naivete, one can only marvel that theater directors support this nonsense by kindly giving their consent, and thereby keep spreading bad taste and fostering the worst abuses. By lending a hand to such ventures they discredit the stage and hasten its decline and ruin. The public's stomach becomes so spoiled by such unhealthy fare that it would have to be subjected to a strict diet before it could once again tolerate more

substantial and refined dishes. Once the evil is in place, part of the guilt unavoidably falls on the leadership; for no one will deny that a court or town theater is intended to help art to flourish, and not just to offer sundry productions that are amusing enough to have the court or town willingly finance them. Quite the opposite, the goal of helping art to flourish will lead the theater to works that are worthy of the attention and interest of the courts and of the entire educated public of the town. It thus becomes the task of the heads of theatrical institutions to monitor and limit the influence of empty caprice on their repertoire. They should encourage famous virtuosos and singers to devote their energies to the service of noble works, works that will bring credit to art and that are an honor to present, to hear and to admire.

We certainly do not dispute the right of artists in general and especially the most distinguished among them to find in works or roles of the second rank a hidden charm, some newfound interest or some unexpected benefit, if doing so provides those artists with the opportunity to display certain sides of their talent or abilities in an especially favorable light. We would not wish to curtail their right to claim for themselves certain roles – be they in old, new or unpublished compositions. On the contrary, performing artists might make such excellent use of this right that one should not revoke it. It lies precisely in their hands to call attention to works of genuine beauty in the face of unfavorable circumstances or a distracted public. It would be absurd to want to deny practicing artists their own choice of roles that best correspond to their personal preferences – provided they do not allow (out of mostly egotistical considerations) weak, mediocre or antiquated works to prevail over more deserving, newer or livelier ones – even if doing so means that they need to oppose the majority of the public, to whom we concede no competence in such matters.

We well remember that Madame Schröder-Devrient frequently performed the role of Romeo. But she also guaranteed the success of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, brought greater prestige to Weber's *Euryanthe*, and made it possible to appreciate Schubert's most beautiful lyric creations. She well deserved to satisfy her feminine caprices once she had carried out her artistic duty. If, however, singers simply yield to the general superficiality and theater directors allow the performance of mediocre works that singers find important (since they showcase their personal strengths), then theater management has the right – and indeed the duty – to state their own conditions and require other works. They must do so for the sound reason that in a theater that

jealously guards its reputation, the gifted artist ought to seriously dedicate himself to the beauties of art: He must undertake tasks that appeal to the true artist – not just to those flâneurs of artsy enjoyment, who are attracted to and satisfied by a pretty leg or a plump arm. It is a shame that artists these days are used like a kind of machine that pumps money out of such gaping fools. Theater directors regard them as hardly anything else and let art go to the devil. To secure a masterwork, to perform a difficult work well, and display it to advantage, to raise the level of the repertoire: these are truly the stepchildren under their care, and the least of their concerns! Once such considerations are set aside, then the singers, for their part, feel only too encouraged to discard the last remnants of artistic conscience. In the process, they often harm themselves by rousing and satisfying frivolous curiosity; they welcome every means without regard to their dignity and they abandon, finally, every consideration and scruple with respect to art and its demands.

Infected by women's widespread passion for trouser roles – even including Otello¹² – Malibran performed Romeo, but she felt the deficiencies in Bellini's work so acutely that she replaced the last act with the one from [Nicola] Vaccai's opera of the same name which includes the famous cantabile, "Ah, se tu dormi, sveglia-ti"; it is generally considered superior and still performed in France and Italy. This great artist, then, proved at least that she was not indifferent to art: She did not simply want to be applauded (she would have achieved that with any work she performed) but strove to perform her roles not only brilliantly but worthy of the respect due to artists. Incidentally, Bellini's opera had just been composed and still possessed the youthful, quickly fading charm that the French call *beauté du diable*. A work mediocre in itself but fashioned according to the taste of the day can possess a fleeting fragrance which justifies the predilection of distinguished theatergoers and the indulgence of artists – just as painters can be enchanted by the charms of a young face without having to take into account the irregularity or insignificance of its features. Such works indeed have a right to exist, and therefore it is even appropriate to offer them to the public in their first bloom – when the morning dew still adorns them. But since they lack sufficient vitality, they become unpleasant if their life is extended beyond its inherent limits and they continue to be presented, faded and decayed, in full view. As

¹² Neither Rossini nor Verdi wrote their Otellos as trouser roles, but Maria Felicità Malibran, thanks to the huge range of her voice, did sing Rossini's Otello.

the opera of a young composer, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* deserved the consideration it received at the time of its appearance; it elicited an expectation of greater works – one that was indeed fulfilled. But how extremely inappropriate it is today – when even better works by this composer are approaching their decline – to try to keep alive on *German* stages one of the weakest compositions of Bellini and his school.

I Capuleti e i Montecchi can be counted among the series of hybrid works that owe their existence to a mixture of Rossini's legacy and the newly emerging principles of the Romantic school. But only the least valuable elements of the two trends are to be found here. Its melodic form belongs to the older Italian opera – exclusively designed for the chirping away of more or less dramatic, more or less motivated, *emotions*. Its subject matter, however, already belongs to the period when the *situation* becomes the trigger of interest. Its melodies are full of that sweet banality, that sentimental feebleness, which, expressed by a pair of pretty young lips, always exercise a certain charm and may well please at the moment they appear in the history of music. As soon as they are out of fashion, however, they become unbearable – like a smile from withered, painted lips. This overly light kind of melody, which immediately captivated every ear and haunted every memory, has, over time, become truly nauseating: owing to its softness, limpness, its lack of energy, sensitivity, originality, and true fire. Constructed without breadth, developed without strength, its phrasing is utterly clumsy. Moreover, the text constitutes one of the most awkward attempts in the early efforts of that period to introduce striking, unexpected, and strange effects into opera in order to heighten its interest by means of extraordinary situations.

Indeed, it would be hard to find material that offers a greater abundance of such situations than *Romeo and Juliet*. From those amorous encounters Shakespeare erects an altar as if from green and strong branches, which he then transforms into a funeral pyre that flares up before our eyes, enabling us to see how a pure, fragrant, glowing flame can ignite the love of two young hearts to the point that they desire and covet death. In the annals of the martyrology of death, there exists no sweeter sacrifice, whether in legend or in myth.

In Bellini's libretto, how brutal, how raw and prosaic is the treatment of the wonderful lucidity of this material, whose ethereal poetry he seemed to shun, a *noli me tangere*; how prosaic are those situations that were assumed to make a sufficient impression on the public. No trace remains of

all the features that create the individuality, the life and truth of Shakespeare's characters. No thought or memory of that swift, full, powerful love that is all ablaze and radiates brilliantly from the moment it reveals itself to the heart. In vain do we seek the heavenly languishing, the love-inspired innocence of the first kiss, the blissful fire that ignores danger and death; nor can we find the balcony scene, the courage of the beloved, the lover's swift resolve. Where are Shakespeare's Tybalt and Mercutio, the witty, glittering, carefree cavaliers, who play with life as if with dice or rhyming sonnets? Where is the nurse, that old woman who reminds us of one of those portraits painted by Denner?¹³ Where is that Capulet who *so loved his daughter from the day of her birth* that he would rather see her dead than happy with the choice of her own heart. Where is the mother who is so tender that she is content to be her daughter's doorkeeper? We even miss Shakespeare's musicians compared to those of Bellini. What is to be found in the opera instead? A feast like all feasts, a young girl supposed to get married (but they all are!), a man in love (like other men in love), a tomb (like all others).

No doubt one could argue that Shakespeare's work presents in essence only a story like many others. What is more common than ambitious and egotistical parents, love-drunk youth – having barely moistened its lips on the chalice of love – seized with frenzy before it has even felt the rapture of love, wishing for death as a kind of voluptuousness since it alone prepares the eternal bridal bed? Romeo's and Juliet's very simplicity is sublime. Nothing unusual appears to distinguish these two people in love. Their desire for each other grows and develops in the most ordinary surroundings and circumstances: sudden enchantment as they gaze at each other's beauty, secret meetings, hesitation and danger, longing and ardor, adoration and passion, union and bliss, sorrow and delight, a complete merging and oblivion of the one with the other, misfortune, catastrophe, a shared death. Is this not the calamitous yet true story of many lovers? But who tells the survivors about the throbbing of their bosoms, as if touched by the scorching breeze of the Orient, about the sensations that run like electrical currents through their veins, about the storms that darken the bright horizon of their passion? Who tells them about their happiness and sorrow, their tears in life, their smile in death? All that they take silently into the grave. Only the genius is able to penetrate with clairvoyant eyes the shadowy darkness of love's secrets, to remove the cover from the ecstatic joy and despondent heartbreak of the lovers – as the alabaster globe of a lamp may be shattered to let the light shine in full power before our

¹³ Balthasar Denner, 1685-1749, highly esteemed German portrait painter.

dazed eyes. Shakespeare has shown us the sun-blazing brilliance of love all the more starkly, since he did not transport it into fictitious regions, into the world of miracles and fairy tales, did not let it unfold among supernatural beings, and did not portray it through the medium of fantasy or the chimeric colors of dreams, in a struggle with the supernatural and inconceivable. He lets us contemplate love as it reveals itself in real life, shows us love's creativity in overcoming the difficulties and obstacles that surround it; in order to convince us all the more powerfully of the truth of the feeling whose chaste splendor he reveals to us, he illuminates the most minor characters with the brightness of his palette.

Shakespeare suffuses the emotional drama with all those elements that influence our fate, above all the state, which – through the intervention of the prince and for the sake of a common purpose – diminishes the individual; next, the hatred, ambition and thirst for revenge, handed down through generations, which, rooted in history, affect the life and fate of the individual. There is the church with its moral instruction and its divine sanctification of the most elevated emotion; the daily incidents of social and domestic life; there are celebrations and dances, death and grief, a wedding and the splendor of its entire retinue – from the most distinguished to the least important. Against this backdrop of abundant reality love glows even truer and more strongly. This vivacious pair of lovers does not walk among ghosts; like them, every member of their society and family is as fully alive as they are – as we are ourselves: animated by tenacious passions, holding fast to stubborn and willful opinions, swooning over fantasies, brimming over with pride, and adhering lovingly to stubborn follies.

One is very nearly ashamed to compare this work of Shakespeare's – in which he rivals Raphael in the warmth of his colors, purity of line, artful arrangement, nobility of poses and gracefulness of drapery – with the inane colored woodcut that Bellini offered. But insofar as we are ashamed, it seems nobler to give voice to our shame than to endure it patiently. Certainly no one looks for a reflection of Raphael's genius in a poor lithograph, or an echo of Shakespeare's muse in an insipid libretto. But since any educated person would blush with shame to let such lithography take pride of place in his room, why does one endure so pitiable a puppet-play without even a grumble? We know that the enthusiastic admirers of the Swan of Avon would be enraged by the mere thought of connecting their poet to such literary rubbish. We wonder how an audience as cultivated as the Germans can take delight in such contemptible productions. Instead of the

Shakespearean characters who are so similar to our contemporaries that we might believe we knew and interacted with them just yesterday, Italian opera parades before us dressed-up automata, dummies on a string, which remind us of the marionettes of the earliest stage of dramatic art. Yet so overwhelming is the tragic force of the situations represented in this drama that the contemplation of their mere contours – like the silhouettes of statues – is sufficient to seize the audience.

If we think of the barbaric manner in which the *operatic wordsmiths* have disfigured the most divine creations – mutilated them without pity or compassion, distorted them to the point of caricature or monstrosity, then we cannot suppress the observation that there are certain defilements of beauty which a genius, in whatever form he may appear, would never allow.

Rossini certainly never paid any attention to the literary worth of the text he was setting. As an offspring of the Gods might play ball with the stars, Rossini played with art. He accepted every text that an impresario offered him. But when he found it altogether too miserable, he made fun of the impresario and the poet, and of the audience that applauded, and of himself as well, if the opera bombed. When, however, a masterpiece of Shakespeare's fell into his hands, he at least created a masterwork in his own mode. In order to form a conception of Rossini's *Otello*, one must have heard it performed by singers who know how to sing – singers of the kind one rarely meets these days. Only those who have heard Donzelli or Rubini as Otello, Pasta, Malibran or Viardot as Desdemona are able to judge the effect this work can produce. They recall the animation that took possession of the entire house when Desdemona cried out, "Se'l padre m'abandonna," and the already legendary emotion with which the Willow Song touched all hearts. Stabs of passion and pain are expressed therein, whose truth and penetrating impact no artist, of whatever school, will deny. Melodic emphasis seems to fully replace the energy of the declamatory style; for Rossini understood the full range of feelings that were to be expressed – feelings whose nature, moreover, was congenial to his country and his audiences.

Although Rossini, the musician, was not able to encompass the psychological and pathological observations that the poet made about the noble soul of Othello, at least he grasped and reproduced all the elegiac melancholy, all the suffering of an innocent soul – in a word, all that moves us about the fate of Shakespeare's Desdemona. Rossini has so closely attained the level of a tragedy, that the *Otello* or *Desdemona* he has created have become types that make it difficult

for any composer who would set the libretto again – just as a second treatment of the subject after Shakespeare would be impossible for any dramatist. Nonetheless, Rossini's opera unfolds in the usual formless fashion of the Italian school, unhampered by dramatic pretensions. When he wished to combine Italian melody with the demand for *situations* – as required by the French stage – he chose, in *William Tell*, a libretto from which he certainly demanded no poetic perfection, but one in which the subject matter, while not disfigured in any offensive way, still offered him impressive scenes (like the oath on the Rütli), or moving ones (like the shooting of the apple). Rossini lent them the richest colors of his palette; and his creation seems the noblest effort produced by a school that was already sinking – as the peak it was destined to reach – and, with regard to the libretto, as a groping attempt to introduce dramatic necessity into an operatic plot. One can make a similar judgment about Bellini's *Norma* and *I Puritani*. Italianate melody is used to advantage in them both; and the former, at least, complies successfully with the demands of the French stage. In *I Capuleti*, on the other hand, we note the combination of the dullest inspirations of the first operatic period¹⁴ with one of the most insipid modern texts; we encounter the pairing of the dullest expression of emotion – the exclusive aspiration of the first operatic period – with the clumsiest sequence of situations – the predominant feature of the second period.

What is there to say, finally, about the absurdity of making this most love-stricken of suitors a trouser role? Such nonsense has lost all of its innocence in our day and is no longer defensible. It took an indolent imagination, the carelessness of a charming young gentleman – this blond, soft, weak, gentle Bellini, the future consumptive – as well as his elegant nonchalance, his melancholy nonchalance with respect to mental and physical traditions, to unthinkingly maintain an old practice of Italian opera without asking himself how this would comport with the intellectual views of our century – with our demand for dramatic plausibility. When people were content with sensuous pleasure, with the melodic expression of a few passionate moments conveyed by the art of singing – as cultivated in a land where the theater is turned into a salon and no one takes the trouble to listen to the progress of a piece – then the most extreme

¹⁴ The Metastasian model described in the essay *Scribe's and Meyerbeer's Robert le Diable*.

improbabilities were coolly accepted. But to maintain in our time such a tradition, whose origin takes us back to a time that indulged even more infuriating habits is an aesthetic scandal.¹⁵

We have often asked ourselves: why does the educated and literary German public take so little offense at the childishness of this opera? Why does it endure without grumbling the dreadful abomination of this glorious tragedy? Why does it obligingly listen to a kind of masquerade or parody of it in an opera that is of so little musical value that France and England already discarded it *fifteen* years ago? In the fatherland of a Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, or Mendelssohn, where one can hear daily and everywhere works by these masters, was it to be expected that one of the most mediocre products of that school can fill houses all year long, while its most brilliant representative is completely neglected? Where, after all, are the works of Rossini sufficiently presented – works whose expansive compositional structure, flow of melody and masterly touch no one in good conscience can deny? It is understandable that admirers of sensual, passionate music might prefer spending an evening with the brilliant images of this master to listening to the serious sounds of a Bach, Beethoven or Weber. But that cities, whose educated circles take pride in understanding the ideas and styles of these masters boast an equally large audience that is happy to have the most pallid of pallid Italian works inflicted upon it – that is indeed a puzzling fact, one whose explanation can be found only in a true disdain of art (disdain hidden behind apparent interest) or in a blasé attitude that sits yawning before the truly beautiful and extols trivialities with feigned enthusiasm.

¹⁵ With this remark Liszt clearly alludes to the use of Castrati.

Donizetti's *La Favorite*

La Favorite was written for the Paris Opera and for Madame [Rosine] Stol[t]z, who at the time was its *favorite [primadonna] assoluta*. These two facts have to be considered in order to recognize both the composer's viewpoint and the standard by which the work should be judged – namely, as one of the best of all those that attempted a fusion of the Italian and French manner. Donizetti followed Rossini's example by writing for a stage that placed more intense dramatic demands on him than had the theaters for which he used to compose. By then Scribe's operatic texts had accustomed the public to even more complex, often violent and exaggerated situations. Auber, Halévy and Meyerbeer had driven the mania for brilliant stage sets, extraordinary scenic devices and magnificent processions to their extremes. Situations and the picturesque were demanded at any price and in abundance. Madame Stoltz ruled over this enchanted castle as the reigning fairy and represented as a singer the genre which Madame Dorval occupied as the heroine in the dramas of Hugo and Dumas. Above all, therefore, a great role had to be created in which she could make a lasting effect – one that would suit her talent, one in which she would be called upon to cry one minute and sigh the next, could be in love and could tremble to her heart's content. She needed a shrill potpourri of despair and hand-wringing, blushing and paling, benediction and curse. Her beauty showed to advantage only in moments of stormy outbursts of feeling, but then it was ravishing and enchanting. When her roles afforded her such great moments, she absorbed one's attention completely; her passionate ardor enflamed the hearts of the audience. When she begged for mercy or forgiveness, she was irresistible. When she was alone on the stage, she made use of every corner of her allotted space to display the sculptural beauty of her gestures in various lighting effects, to devise in every possible setting some new, unexpected tableau and thereby to create for herself an extremely interesting monodrama. Those who do not remember it will hardly understand the point and the essence of the first scene of the second act, or the aria in the third act, where Leonore shouts at *the cruel ones*.¹⁶ The aria seems thoroughly unmotivated when sung by an actress whose dramatic resources consist of nothing more than standing in front of the lights, placing her hands on her breast, or making them part the stage heavens like the vanes of a windmill – while performing

¹⁶ *Venez, cruels, qui vous arrête?* Cabaletta of the aria “*L'ai-je bien entendu? Qui...lui...Fernand.*”

her cabaletta with indifference. For Madame Stoltz, on the other hand, the aria served only as a pretext for an extraordinarily telling interpretation, along with the most eloquent facial expressions with which she electrified the public as only the greatest tragedienne could have done. In a weak performance, the final duet in the fourth act will completely miss the intended effect. However, it can, if necessary, accommodate all the extravagances of exaggeration and even make them seem sublime if a beautiful woman – out of an abundance of inner excitement and accustomed to expressing such exaggerations in a breathless flood of yearning emotion – surrenders to them.

Donizetti understood and fulfilled the conditions of the times in which he wrote for the Grand Opéra, as Rossini for his part had done as well, and, like him, created for the venue a work that can be regarded – along with *Dom Sébastien* – as his most carefully crafted creation, one displaying the most sumptuous flowering of his talent. We find in the libretto much that is successful, even though the dominant intention was clearly to pile up the required number of dramatic situations. The purpose of the action itself is to keep curiosity in suspense at all times, and, by constantly shifting and contrasting the dramatic situations, keep the imagination busy, indeed, and prevent the attention from flagging even when an effect is extended too long. Such a way of doing things, of course, results in a lack of adequate development, impairing the poetic design of the whole and compromising the character portrayals. Hardly any scene or peripeteia lacks a certain grandezza or striking turnabouts. But their variety eventually becomes tiresome, because, in order to incessantly create contrasts, they are deliberately taken from spheres most removed from normal life and the human heart.

There is plenty to see here! A gloomy monastery, sinister monks, church choirs, bells and organ, and, immediately following, a luxurious villa; enchanting, veiled maidens; worldly choruses, a blindfolded suitor escorted to a rendezvous in a covered gondola, the appearance of a bewitching woman; a king's mysterious surprise, a promotion to captain!... In the second act: celebrations and pageantry at a brilliant court; every manner of pomp and splendor in the entourage of a Spanish ruler; sudden horror precipitated by the intervention of a superior ecclesiastical power; contrast between religious austerity and the joys of the world; anathema, banning, despair, horror. In the third act the knot tightens and brings about a palace intrigue: The king, jealous at

first, then choosing magnanimity, concludes peace with the church and, at the same time, fulfills the wish of his former lover. But the villain of the piece spoils the happy solution of the difficulties. Now a great *scene* of fury and anger. The hero revolts against the basically good-natured king; he thrusts the utterly devoted beloved from him: tears, cries of woe – pleading, convulsions and paroxysms, scorn and contempt, the whole mess of emotion; then, for the unfortunate “happy” ending, back to the quiet of the monastery, religious peace; dull echoes and rumblings of half suppressed passion, a heartbreaking encounter, a battle of love, reconciliation, joy – death.

Among this jumble of scenes (akin to the images of a magic lantern), we find, incidentally, a few of genuine poetic intent: for example, the scene in which Fernand sees himself as the plaything in a double perfidy of female and royal favor, both equally shameful; also the scene in which, Fernand, assuming that he has been seduced and promoted only to be made the superfluous husband of a mistress, demands back his honor from the king, hurls at the feet of the sovereign the favors gained at too high a price, and, finally, breaks the sword that he had carried in his majesty’s service so as not to raise it in revenge against an anointed head. The whole scene could be a beautiful part of a serious tragedy. No less exciting is the final meeting of the two lovers where Fernand recognizes and rejects his beloved who dared to deceive his heart – a scene where love nevertheless still holds enough power over him to compel him to hear her justification. As he stands facing a remorseful and penitent woman, this love responds to her pleading and wrests these poignant words from his lips: “May God forgive you.” When she anxiously asks: “And you?” he shouts at her, “I love you!” – No poet would spurn such moments.

As for the music: the opera contains passages in which the declamation is vividly and affectingly rendered; and many of its melodies must count among the most ingratiating and lovely of the transalpine Muse. The Andante Finale of the third act, constructed on a scale even larger than those of *Lucia* and *Lucrezia*, is undoubtedly one of Donizetti’s most successful musical creations. Donizetti, admittedly, is not one of those composers who have broken once and for all with the sweet habits of laziness and carelessness. Sensitivity and imagination did not quite carry him to those regions where the least lack of refinement infuriates and hurts the true artist. With respect to his works in general, one owes him gratitude for the fact that he occasionally succeeds in avoiding the usual patterns and shopworn operatic maneuvers long enough to make room for a

short but moving moment of inspiration. If the aforementioned finale has the negative advantage of remaining free from banalities, then the arias, choruses, ritornelli, cadenzas and orchestral moments are full of them. In the first act the monks sing their C major scale with exemplary calm and ease. In the last act, however, in complete contradiction to the rules of Trappist monasteries, the composer accompanies the monks' singing with all the brass and with a scandal from which these silent recluses would recoil.¹⁷ Liszt here seems to refer to the fact that a woman, Leonor, in a monk's habit, has entered the monastery. Other such discordant moments are of no great concern – either for him or for others. One must concede, however, in all fairness, that this utterly inappropriate passage is followed by a prayer in very good style and that the opera is altogether distinct from others by the composer because its various weaknesses are compensated for and concealed by much that is quite interesting.

Does anything exist anywhere without errors, deficiencies, weaknesses? The most partisan admirers of the divine Homer, after all, have to admit that the sublime old man sometimes nods off. Would one wish to claim that great musicians fare better: that Gluck, Spontini, and even Mozart are always at their peak? That a few banalities or monotonous passages in a work justify shrugging it off? One should refrain from applying such a standard, according to which works that are generally and rightly admired would undergo an examination that would leave little flesh on their bones. Criticism that would emphasize only the weaknesses of a work of art must itself be criticized – for criticism must seek out the beauties of a piece. Faultlessness does not constitute the sole value of a work, but a lack of beauty does suffice to condemn it. Only envy and lack of fairness would withhold from works that contain undeniable beauties their rightful recognition even when human imperfection plays its part. True inspiration is not so common that we should discount it, just because we encounter many a superficiality along with it. From this point of view *La Favorite* should probably be considered Donizetti's best work, even though it is his least performed work in Germany.

His most frequently performed operas are, first of all, *Lucia [di Lammermoor]*, which contains some of his most felicitous melodies but is, in his nonchalant manner, shoddily cobbled together. The librettist has translated one of the most touching stories of Walter Scott not only into scenic

¹⁷ Liszt here seems to refer to the fact that a woman, Leonor, in a monk's habit, has entered the monastery.

clichés: he added a scene that, while contributing considerably to the commercial success of work, is nonetheless somewhat repellent for those with refined taste. Just as “Trema Bisanzio,” from [Donizetti’s] *Belisario*, a tenor aria greatly esteemed in the past, has already become an object of ridicule, the howling curse of Edgardo [“Maledetto, maledetto sia l’istante”] as the expression of the rawest brutality will sooner or later have the same fate. There can be no doubt that the refined Scottish writer would never have allowed the proud, amorous Ravenswood to let a weak, timid girl be so ferociously attacked. No lover, no knight, behaves this way. But: “Maledetta!” – “Cabaletta”! One has to follow the other – so goes the logic of librettos!

Musically considered, *Lucrezia [Borgia]* belongs to the same level as the aforementioned opera, but the more drastic subject matter itself required stronger colors. Here, too, the French writer’s poetic development has been quite mutilated to produce the mandatory operatic nonsense. The situations taken from Victor Hugo’s drama, devoid of all of the motivations that gradually prepare the viewer for the dreadful events and unnatural emotions, become nothing but a succession of morally outrageous, gruesome scenes. Both *Anna Bolena* and *Marino Faliero* contain famous concert numbers. *Dom Sébastien*’s deliberate carefulness remains cold in execution and leaves one cold. In *Belisario*, the tenor’s often tremulous “Trema” may give the aesthetic sinner Donizetti a mighty tremor when he stands before the tribunal of the angry Muse. *Linda [de Chamounix]*: about whose blandness only something bland can be said; *L’elisir d’amore*, which contains a lot of sugared water but little elixir; *Don Pasquale*, an amusing *opera buffa*; *La fille du régiment* – Halt! Present arms! Dilettantes to the front, connoisseurs behind!

This masterwork can boast of greater protection than the merely critical: it has the entire Areopagus of theater cashiers on its side, who surely outweigh – by far – the dignity of all the Aristarchs who might well treat us like St. Stephen should we ever dare to question the success of this opera.¹⁸ It has, after all, given two female singers the opportunity to spar over who, acting the title role in dubious costume, could sound the drum with greater chasteness: virgin or mother. It has provided fun for chaste and unchaste viewers alike, it has provided income – and one could raise the price of tickets!

It is not surprising that, among the works already mentioned, one fails to find either *Il furioso all’isola di San Domingo* (from which only a single Romance has survived its early death), or

¹⁸ Areopagus: The major court of ancient Greece; Aristarchos of Samothrace, ancient Greek philologist, the model of a competent critic; St. Stephen was stoned to death.

Parisina (which owes its furor in Italy to Miss [Caroline] Ungher), or *Maria di Rohan*, *Tasso* and others. One can readily imagine that cursorily sketched plots, glossed over with quickly invented music and always hastily performed, cannot please in a country that makes more serious demands. However, since in Germany all the exotic musical creations are introduced in our native language, and the most mediocre composers of all the neighboring kingdoms have the best chance of finding themselves on handbills here, of being played and applauded (And should China boast of a composer, he would have the best hope of soon feeling at home here.), and since all this happens in order to create an “event,” one proceeds empirically in the choice of repertoire so that the best works of well known composers are often ignored or neglected, like *William Tell* and *Le Comte d’ Ory* of Rossini, or the opera with which this essay is concerned.

Art develops in two parallel lines on the German stages. One is planted with sparsely sown, beautiful native works that are highly valued by musicians; the other swarms with foreign works that attract the crowd, but which the connoisseurs disdain to judge and appreciate. They deliberately protest – often with exaggerated contempt – against all foreign works, and one is tempted to believe that this exclusive preference for works of native masters gives the lie to the proverb that no man is a prophet in his own country. But one suddenly notices (to one’s greater astonishment) that works that are more deeply imbued with a national spirit – flourishing, as it were, in the shade of the thousand-year- old Veleda’s oak ¹⁹ – have also been ostracized by these puritans, owing to prejudices that have grown strong and powerful as a consequence of other cultural circumstances, trends and trains of thought. What inconsistency! What a strange tangle of contradictions! The same artists and experts who praise to high heaven every pen stroke of the patriarchs of German art obstinately refuse to recognize works which, armed with the crown and arms of the German mind and soul, emerge from the heads of German genius. But – because they have restricted their own point of view, limited their horizon, because they were unwilling to identify with any other way of thinking and feeling than their own – in the end they still see their own deity, so to speak, only in profile. They bow in admiration before a few creations of the national Muse, or before individual aspects thereof so devotedly that they become blind to any others. They perform a kind of fetish service that injures their own cult and makes it appear

¹⁹ Veleda was a Germanic prophetess, described by Tacitus. Liszt suggests here, that Wagner, with his themes from Germanic mythology, is nevertheless spurned.]

as superstition rather than conviction. Certain names are then inscribed on altars, their apotheosis solemnly decreed. And let no one speak of these Gods as if they were mortals, or study the reasons for their importance, or trace the origins of their merits, the bases of their weaknesses, or the effects of their influence – either in order to reveal the conditions that affected their artistic existence, or to reveal those that have favored or impeded the development of their genius. They are placed on imaginary pedestals as pillars of Hercules.²⁰ But by doing so they provoke a natural reaction against them, because art, in its unceasing progress, recognizes no border gods. No one can shout to the flood tide of the spirit, “Only to this point and no further.”

After they have completely aligned themselves with a few dead masters (because to be dead is a *conditio sine qua non* for acceptance into the circle of their gods), these artists and *serious connoisseurs* disdain even to glance at anything non-German. For them justice is too difficult a virtue with respect to those who have sung under another sky, in another physical and moral climate, in another mode. Form and content of foreign traditions remain completely closed to them, and thus they lack any sensitivity for them. There are noted critics who do not deem it below their dignity to devote their time to the analysis of mediocre contrapuntal endeavors, as long as they are written in the style they approve or comprise the palest imitations of only the palest works of any master belonging to their conventional Valhalla; but they treat as mere *puppet theater* those works that may not appeal to a certain trend in taste but whose lively and spirited qualities cannot be denied – even if they should come from *across the Rhine*.

The public itself readily acknowledges that it is not – and does not wish to be – connoisseur enough to be condemned to listen to nothing but Mozart, Beethoven and Weber. Yet this same public decides between the life and death of the box office, wanting to amuse itself with whatever amuses Paris, London and Milan. Without any ability to judge the artistic merit of different works, it basically listens to everything with the same indifference and can be moved to applause by a host of trifles which one hardly notices. Out of such trifles, by the way, one could put together a collection full of instructive facts and piquant anecdotes that would represent the *different causes that lead to operatic successes*. Perhaps the public bears less blame for this than might at first appear. Without a competent and guiding hand, it lets itself be swayed in the most

²⁰ The ancient metaphor for absolute borders.

random way by minor details. The pretty dress of a pretty singer, a new set, fairies swimming up close, a churchyard or a ballet quite naturally determine the number of performances an opera will see if it sails on the rocky waves of fashion.

How could the taste of the public be better educated? In our time neither directors nor famous singers nor conductors feel it their duty to offer the public things of genuine intrinsic value; still less do they provide an opportunity to help the audience better understand works that it does not applaud right from the start. When they indulge the public's most irrational caprices, they often resemble those princely tutors who yield to rather than curb the whims of their pupils. Only rarely do they make any attempt to perform – even in a half-way satisfying way – works that demand precise study and conscientious care. As a rule, they are happy to rehash old saws, are pleased to offer what has pleased or caused a sensation elsewhere, or whatever some money-spinning artist spins into the latest fashion. Given such circumstances, how could one evaluate a work based on its success in Germany?

In our opinion, the unfortunate division between the connoisseurs and the general public is a serious misfortune, which will gradually exert the most pernicious influence on the artistic life of Germany. It is most to blame for the preconceived and unjust disdain with which educated musicians, by their resentful silence, avenge themselves for the successes enjoyed by foreign works. Owing to their bias, they both fail to bestow on better works the praise they deserve, and to reject lesser works composed in a style or by authors, the study of which should not be neglected in and of itself, and the continued existence of which is altogether necessary for the theater.

Boieldieu's *La Dame Blanche*

The plot of Boieldieu's masterwork was adapted from two novels by Walter Scott: *Guy Mannering* and *The Monastery*. In addition, it borrows a plot line from a third work of Scott's. Owing to the praise that was so quickly bestowed upon it, *La Dame Blanche* inaugurated in splendid fashion the period when one turned enthusiastically to famous novels to create works for the theater. If this practice had been limited to opera, then it could be viewed as one of a series of transformations that had been undertaken in an attempt to remedy a clearly felt need – namely, to make operatic librettos more interesting by presenting moving tableaux. The practice, in that case, could be considered merely a transitory abuse. But that is not what happened. Rather, this harmful trend immediately spread to all branches of dramatic literature in both France and Germany. This disaster has only increased and gotten worse in the ensuing years. The success which just this past winter the *ladies* with camelias and perles²¹ enjoyed in France, and the *orphan* of Lowood in the wake of *the lady professor* in Germany, hardly heralds an early end to the proliferation of novels on the stage.²² Enticing a curious public at any price – and especially at a low price – slowly kills art, for it lures the audience away from the nobler impressions that it ought to seek in dramatic works of art.

The need for excitement is universal. But a refined mind will experience the excitement that art awakens in the noblest regions of the mind – by means that satisfy the probing intellect. Only the crudest skill suffices to make the uninformed spectator laugh or cry. Such impressions, however, are fleeting; and whatever provoked them is soon forgotten. The educated spectator who is able to assess the quality of a work will bestow a lasting appreciation on the better ones, though he will likely express it with less noise. Art is of concern only to a select public consisting of such educated individuals; absent such a public, true art is in danger of decline. Although the number of those who enjoy beauty in art and recognize its various manifestations will always and everywhere be limited, their increase or decrease can still be influenced – mainly by those who guide artistic institutions. They are able to do so insofar as they provide many in the audience

²¹ *La Dame aux camélias* and *La Dame aux perles* are novels by Alexandre Dumas.

²² *Die Waise von Lowood* is a dramatization of *Jane Eyre*; *Frau Professorin* is a short story by Berthold Auerbach, fashioned into a drama under the title *Dorf und Stadt* (Village and City) by Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer.

with opportunities to shape their taste on the basis of beautiful and noble intellectual experiences; for one develops the ability to judge a work only through the habit of frequently seeing and comparing distinguished works.

The deep-rooted abuse of dramatizing novels runs directly counter to the advancement of good taste and true understanding. Such products all too easily make an effect on the emotions of the spectator who, remembering his favorite readings, brings along, already fully formed, the impressions that he is supposed to experience afresh. Filling in all the gaps and weaknesses of the work at hand, he demands little effort on the part of the author to keep his interest alive. After all: he is already familiar with the *dramatis personae* from having read the novel. The flimsiest framework suffices to call to mind well-known incidents, whose stage presentation then often produces an effective yet banal attraction for the simple reason that one expects from it a glimmer of plausibility for the most implausible things. The viewer, then, leaves the theater like someone drunk from adulterated wine who has lost the necessary keenness of the senses to judge the purity, taste and aroma of a noble drink.

It would certainly be futile to try to restrict the art of drama to a single form. Its shape and essence necessarily bear the imprint of contemporary customs and ideas. Every era, every nation, casts its own individual light on dramatic form, which will be created in accordance with contemporary views. The theater of Greece and Rome, just like that of modern-day nations – Spain, England, France, Germany – is comprehensible only within the context of the civilization in which it reaches its days of glory. Although the human heart, unvarying in its original inborn passions, is the eternal prototype of the art of drama (just as the human form provides the prototype for sculpture and painting), its representation varies endlessly owing to differences of race, physiognomy and modes of expression, and always according to the forms that the same feeling assumes amid the continual change of customs and ideas.

In the novel, too, the human heart provides the prototype: the task of the novel lies in portraying the changes the heart experiences as the result of different influences. But it does not follow that the subject matter of the novel can be treated just as well on the stage. Although the subject matter, in and for itself, may be suitable for stage representation, the novel (by means of its

characteristic manipulations) molds it in a manner that does not work well on the stage: both their laws of proportion and the elements intrinsic to each differ entirely from one another. Indeed, all the arts, whose task it is to hold a mirror up to society and to the human heart, search for their basic materials in the history, chronicles, traditions, legends, and tales (in the archives, as it were, of the nations) – as well as in their mysterious, enigmatically formulated origins: that is, in what we know as myth. But every art extracts its material from these sources in different ways for the purposes dictated by its own unique forms and transformations. Every story presents itself to the eyes of poets and visual artists like a landscape which they seek to exploit according to their different needs. Some merely desire to reproduce it as a whole; others dig deep for hidden precious metals. Another will only be concerned about some strange contour or unusual color: everyone has a different point of view, digs for different treasures, demands answers to different questions.

Emotions, affects, postures, and gestures, which the field of sculpture is called upon to render, are as unique and inborn to human nature as those pertaining to the sphere of painting. The former, however, can bestow poetic truth only on certain affects and postures whose eloquence and expression can be enhanced by means of the effect of contour, the curvature of forms, different angles and via the solemn majesty of this art form. Painting, on the other hand, chooses for subject matter those emotions and gestures whose contrasts and overwhelming energy can be connected and modulated by means of the color transitions at its disposal, and holds them before our eyes and mind like a magic conjuration which it can bring close or move into the distance, as it pleases.

Marble is tangible: it has specific weight – like living matter. Works of sculpture, then, exist for the blind, too; they have a tendency toward realism, which pictures lacks. Painting compensates for this lack with the greater diversity of its subject matter, with the liveliness of movement, the appeal of its colors, and with perspective. If painters and sculptors observe the necessity of these distinctions, which constitute the fundamental requirements of their art forms, then neither will copy the other. If they give expression, therefore, to one and the same thought, they will have to do so in completely different ways. They will frame and idealize the same thought differently, consider it from different angles; they will have to represent identical feelings in utterly different forms. Only if each of these artists expresses a thought in the manner that is appropriate and

fruitful for his own art form, will his work produce analogous moods and feelings in the viewer. How mistaken is the artist who allows himself be directly inspired by the product of another art form – who would transfer it without any modifications, except those imposed by the difference of materials.

But is it not just as inappropriate to display a group of characters from a novel against the backdrop of a stage set? Both painting and the novel emulate nature's magical perspectives, its hazy distant views and the most imperceptible nuances of color. The novel is able to lend to its vivid scenes that transparency which painters call "aerial perspective." It can also cloud over groups of characters, wrap them in a grey mist or in iris-colored waves that soften their contours and lend them the charm of a shimmering mystery to be divined; or it can portray – as if through a magnifying glass – every wrinkle on the face of an old man, every beauty mark on the cheeks of youth. But drama, like sculpture, must capture the course of a single minute as well as the movements that characterize an individual in that brief span. The novel is not content with the depiction of reality: it seeks to imitate it. But in order to create the illusion of reality fully and completely, the novel will incorporate only those facts that integrate, in the focal point of a single action, all the essential rays of light that allow the physiognomies of the principal characters to be observed and understood.

Factual reality, described and glorified in a novel through detailed narration, can scarcely resemble the vivid turning points, the peripeteias of drama. Both must show us individuals from different angles, through different modes of representation, in altered proportions. The greatest advantage of the novel consists in the psychological dissections it is able to present. With analytic precision it reveals to us the workings of the heart, its most imperceptible stirrings in their continuous succession, and lets us hear its every beat. The novel discloses to our eyes and to our mind the heart's chain of emotions, link by link, as well as their complex interplay. Stage drama, in contrast, reveals to us the human soul only synthetically, so to speak; its affects, virtues, and failings are perceptible only insofar as they are presented to us externally: by their intensity and scope – and their results.

The novel can lend high interest to the simplest action by unveiling the hidden, unspoken, unacknowledged, silent feelings which rule the course of an individual life; or it can illuminate, with the hue of varied, shimmering reflections, the smallest incidents of a life that entralls us

from the moment we can observe its texture and weave. The theatre demands action and prefers clearly and decisively drawn characters who impress us powerfully and vividly. Expansion of time and place is advantageous for the novel; drama will usually benefit from shrinking both. The novel naturally leans toward the portrayal of confused emotions, of intense, protracted passions and exceptional characters. It depicts their inner life by tracing the manifold roots as well as the nature and manner of the resulting actions – similar to a poem that explores the same ground (Note that Byron called his poems in that vein *Tales*). The choice of these kinds of personalities, of secrets of the heart and complicated motives are rarely an advantage on the stage. The emotions represented there must be of a simple nature. They must be rooted in the ordinary regions of the heart and appear understandable and accessible to most people –even though the stage idealizes these emotions, raises them above bare reality, increases their intensity, enlarges their scale and proportions – the way the cothurn of ancient tragedy symbolized all of this intensification by extending the very height of the actors beyond the normal.

In common with all art forms, the novel and the drama have truth and beauty as their highest purpose; but it would be misleading to let them strive toward this end in the same forms. Every effort to reproduce on the stage those scenes the reader of a novel visualizes most vividly, i.e., the most dramatic emotions of the most decisively-acting, vivid characters, expressed in a most fiery dialog – all that may perhaps appear successful in a few scenes. No doubt one may find piquant moments, along with a charming or solemn tableau that will make the play popular and will touch or amuse the public for a while. But never will a true work of art arise in this manner – one whose intrinsic worth will survive the fleeting mood of the moment. And the more splendid the adapted novel is on its own terms the less will the dramatization retain its excellence. Indeed, the more successfully emotions, situations and characters correspond to the demands of the novel, the more ill- suited will they look on the stage.

Despite the obvious inadequacy of dramatized versions of novels, the concoction of such works for the stage increases daily and serves as proof of how meager is the number of outstanding dramatic works. The German and French stages are inundated with the most mediocre fabrications produced by these scribblers. All novelists see their works on the stage – or fashion the dramatic versions themselves, e.g., Balzac, G. Sand, Dumas, Eugène Sue, [Karl] Spindler,

[Ludwig] Storch, [Henrich] Zschokke, [Berthold] Auerbach etc. Untalented hacks condense works of ten or twelve volumes; they expand short stories, and (to make sure nothing escapes their clutches), they turn literary knickknacks into plays, and shake off the dust of a hundred years from trashy old tomes in order to put make-up and fancy dress on one of its characters. Even the English novel, which usually revolves around a *simple story*, does not escape this masquerade, and [Elizabeth Inchbald's] *Simple Story*, for example, had to suffer this travesty, as well. Everyone knows that dealing in such arrangements is not a matter of art but of making money; that to attain a certain know-how in this enterprise, neither poetic talent nor invention is required; that stage experience, knowledge of the public and the effects to which it is predisposed will suffice. And yet no theater director, no dramatic artist rebels against this stage malady, no matter how much they may otherwise boast of their serious, artistic pretensions.²³

While this genre flourished in literature, how could opera have failed to capitalize on so easy and rich a source of appeal? On the contrary, should opera not be congratulated that every newly published novel, thumbed and worn in the lending libraries, became a well-prepared bait for the elegant, gawking plutocracy?

When Boieldieu composed *La Dame Blanche* in 1825 to a libretto by Scribe, the latter had already studied the Parisian scene and its public, which later allowed him to achieve, if not undivided, then certainly undisputed, dominion over it. Walter Scott's tremendous success could not escape his notice; and the interest the Scottish bard aroused in his country's highly picturesque customs and landscapes enabled Scribe to discover the benefit that could be drawn from local color – an element which was then exploited by lesser talents, and with little delicacy, to the point of oversaturation. Beginning with this opera, Scribe developed his skill for linking together situations that were suitable for the Paris Opéra, whose public is little inclined either toward involvement with serious and well-developed character portraits, nor (unlike the Italians) toward completely immersing itself in a sensuous musical experience.

The association of Lully with Molière and Quinault was established at the cusp of opera's rise in France; and Quinault's talent – notwithstanding Boileau's and la Fontaine's epigrams – earned

²³ Liszt: Except for Dingelstedt in Munich, who, alone among theater directors has declared that he will not present any play by Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, one of the most widely known and popular of the "dress cutters" of novels.

him warm admirers and a seat in the Academy.²⁴ This association accustomed the French early on to place a certain importance on operatic texts: to demand from them at least a relatively high value, if not the perfection of a tragedy or comedy. Those demands were never entirely abandoned, although they might change in accordance with the taste and ideals of each period. Operas of equal musical value failed if their plot was trite; others, owing to their plot, gained favor; and renowned poets like [Michel Jean] Sedaine shared the honor of operatic success equally with a Philidor, a Monsigny, a Grétry.

The establishment of an Opéra Comique alongside the Royal Academy of Music constituted a separation more apparent than real. In the former, recitative was replaced with spoken dialogue and the works compressed into a tighter framework. But neither was satisfied with an exclusively comic or serious genre. Both demanded dramatic interest and recognized good music only when it was joined to entertaining intrigue, when it appeared in connection with a libretto that one could follow in a state of suspense. Grétry's *Richard Coeur de Lion*, Méhul's *Joseph*, and Cherubini's *Deux Journées*, equal in fame, are representatives of the mixed operatic genre that was successful at the time: one that balanced affecting, charming, piquant and comic moods; that let a smile follow upon tears, and – while not donning the tragic cothurn – only partly assumed the mask of Thalia. Scribe owed his immense popularity to the fact that he found the basic chord of this key and then encountered the right man in Meyerbeer, who was able to multiply a hundredfold the effects laid out for him by deploying to the fullest all the resources of his art. Scribe had early on become too versed in stage optics and practice to search for Meyerbeer plots in novels, and he clearly recognized earlier than others the fruitlessness of this practice. But back in 1825 it was still a novelty to borrow the framework, characters and location of an opera from the widely disseminated novels of a universally admired author. Scribe, however, was not the first to bring Walter Scott onto the stage. Rossini had already discovered how greatly mountain songs, as well as choruses of bards or warriors could be heightened by the picturesque Highlands setting as well as by the memory of this author's most graceful poem. Although the score of *La donna del lago* is in no way inferior to other works that enjoyed a better fate, the charming little *chef d'oeuvre* was so badly disfigured by the librettist that scarcely a few precious numbers have

²⁴ Molière and Philippe Quinault supplied Lully with fourteen and eleven libretti respectively. Jean de la Fontaine was asked by Lully to write a libretto for *Daphne*, which he never composed. In a satire titled *Le Florentin*, La Fontaine then ridiculed Lully's excessive demands for an opera libretto; Quinault was the object of a satire by Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux.]

survived. Scribe understood the appropriateness of the intention but avoided the clumsiness of the execution. Compared to the level of interest offered by a *Barbe bleue*, *Chaperon rouge* and *Cendrillon* (by, respectively, Grétry, Isouard, and Boieldieu himself), the harmonious correspondence of text and music in *La Dame Blanche* was a tangible step forward – one that easily explains the stir that the opera made. One can apply to it the comment that [Angelica] Catalani once made of Madame [Henriette] Sontag: “She is great in her genre but her genre is small.” Everything here is finely wrought and put together with grace; the small figures are all perfectly balanced, and the melody stands out by virtue of a kind of roguish sentimentality.

More than a hundred years after its first performance in 1778, Lully’s *Thésée* was presented for the last time on the very stage that he had founded and despotically ruled by continuously staging his own works (some of which saw nearly a thousand performances). *La Dame blanche* has already been given 777 times in the theater for which it was written. But whether it will still be performed in 1925, whether the overall genre of opera to which it belongs will long survive, or whether it is already too late to remain on the same path any longer: we cannot say.

Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella*

This work was written in 1818, ten years before the composer's death, and given its first performance in 1854, that is, thirty-six years later.

We are well aware of the great mission Schubert fulfilled in the art of music – how he devoted virtually his entire life to composition. Whereas the act of creation, for many artists, is no more than an episodic occupation of a life absorbed by all kinds of storm and stress as well as personal activities, others ruminate deeply over painfully crafted works – the latter devoting only a few hours a day to the act of creation, the former only a few years. Schubert, on the other hand, withdrew from the real world, from private passions – from his personal life, as it were – to pursue only poetry, to breathe music. He exhaled his very soul within its atmosphere; his *élan vital* seemed to gush forth in the torrent of his pen. Time, in this way, was condensed for him; years were crowded into months, and – although snatched from art while still young – he lived long enough to reach the maturity of his artistic genius. Indeed, the number and significance of the creations of his last ten years equal three times over what someone else might accomplish in a lifetime. This last period of his life contained a wealth of experiences that taught him to understand the nature and range of his genius.

The work before us should therefore be regarded as a product of his youth. Its weaknesses, moreover, are understandable, given the rapidity with which he went about it. This practice did not give him enough time to ponder the plan for his compositions: to carefully refine them as he was working (or once they were completed), or to consider his creations in relation to the art of his time and the past. Quickly following his inspiration, he gave immediate expression to the feelings ablaze in his soul. His enthusiasm was ignited by great poetry as if by a noble wine; and his only pleasure was to pour forth in divine song the abundance of his spiritual and poetic life.

One finds it difficult to believe that a soul like Schubert's, accustomed to substantial, refined and poetic fare, should not have noticed the inadequacy of his chosen libretto. Just as he was wont to reproduce the impressions that sprang warm and lively from lyric poetry, without analyzing the literary design of the subject matter – aside from the feelings expressed in the verses – he proceeded with the composition of his opera without subjecting its libretto to meticulous

criticism. Furthermore, noticing that Italian operas based on the most mediocre texts enjoyed great success day in and day out, he easily fell into the error of believing that the paltry significance of an operatic text libretto was simply an unavoidable evil without racking his brain about the reasons for it. Since he did not maintain close contact with any of the literary heroes of his time, he could not possibly expect a libretto from them. If through luck one of them had furnished him with a libretto it is doubtful that it would have revealed to him the shortcomings of the one he was about to set to music. After all: if one considers the poetic material that even a Goethe intended for operas or cantatas, one can readily see how dismissively highly gifted poets at the time treated the material intended for music.

Living in modest and humble seclusion, Schubert could not gain entry into the enviable realm of composers who were regularly performed. *Alfonso und Estrella* was never performed or published. Had the opera been performed, it could have given pleasure and would probably have brought him fame more quickly than even his more inspired songs, which were slow to be recognized. The demands placed on drama at the time had not yet reached that stage of development where the poetic text would have appeared as inexcusably insipid to the contemporary generation as it does to ours.

The literature of the French Empire had cultivated a taste for idyllic situations, unexpected recognition scenes, gradual achievement of general happiness, for a mixture of military reversals and pastoral scenes. Overthrown kingdoms and tender love mutually influenced each other, and their incidents blended with reality. At the time, Paris greatly admired *Les Battuecas* of Mademoiselle de Genlis with its portrayal of a secluded people living in the Spanish Sierras, akin to those in Schubert's opera, raised by the dethroned King Froila in a state of pastoral happiness. In its melodic quality, Schubert's opera equals any of those by Gyrowetz, Winter or Weigl that were so popular at the time. But just as those operas have since disappeared almost entirely from the stage, so must a performance of *Alfonso und Estrella* be regarded as an act of piety: the settling of a debt of honor by unrelated descendants that could not be settled with the creditor during his lifetime. Even if the work had enjoyed some success at the time of its creation, it would hardly have enjoyed a revival. But since it was made to suffer unjustly, it is up to today's artists to present it as a historical artifact, one that could very well elicit interesting observations. In Act One we see Froila, the king of Léon, who, overthrown by a rival king, has taken refuge in a deep valley where he brings happiness to its unknown inhabitants. His son (Alfonso) has just

carried off the prize in games and exercises that turns the victor into the leader of the valley's youth for one year. But this achievement does not satisfy his burning desire for action. He would like to break through the boundaries erected by the strict rules his father has imposed for many years on his new subjects. He expresses to his father the distress these frustrating barriers cause him but nevertheless restrains his desire to roam afar. His father promises him, however, that the prohibitions will one day be removed from him and gives him a golden chain as a pledge in fulfillment of his promise. The scene changes to the palace of the usurper (Mauregato), whose general, returning victoriously, asks for the hand of his daughter (Estrella) – the king having promised the general any reward he might choose for his heroic deeds. But Estrella dislikes him. Her father, although a notorious tyrant, is unwilling to compel her and explains that, according to a holy dictum, whoever wins back for him the golden chain of St. Eurich – which has disappeared from the treasure house since the overthrow of the previous king – will gain the hand of Estrella.

In Act Two, Estrella loses her way in Froila's hills during a hunt and by chance encounters Alfonso. Their young hearts, captivated by each other's beauty, become aflame with love; when they part, Alfonso gives her, as a token of this moment, the golden chain he received from his father. In the meantime, the lovelorn general has ravaged and plundered every possible Moorish and Christian castle in the area, but has not discovered the fatal chain anywhere. Finding it easier to remove his king from the throne instead, he conspires toward this end with the leaders of the army. This happens just at the right moment, as his resolution gives rise to two of the best numbers in the opera: the chorus of conspirators who have gathered at night among the ruins and the chorus of nobles who have remained loyal to Mauregato and promise to defend him. As the latter receives news of the insurrection, his daughter, returned from the hunt, tells him that a handsome stranger has presented her with the chain. This is revealed at once to be St. Eurich's jewel, which the *Orlando furioso ed innamorato* had been searching for in vain.²⁵

In the third act the insurgents gain victory in battle not far from the mountainous region where Froila dwells. The general encounters the fleeing Estrella by chance. He is just about to drag her away when, at her cry for help, Alfonso rushes to her side, frees her, and takes the guilty general

²⁵ While referring to the general, who is both in love and furious, Liszt combines the titles of two literary works, *Orlando innamorato* by Matteo Maria Boiardo, and *Orlando furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto, which was conceived as a sequel to the former.

prisoner. When Alfonso learns that his heart's desire is the daughter of the defeated king, he calls his comrades to arms and presses the soldiers – scattered during the defeat but still loyal – to assemble under his command. The young princess, meanwhile, finds shelter in [Froila's] lonely valleys, whence fate guides Mauregato, who has been pursued by the insurgents, as well. Mauregato, suddenly catching sight of Froila, takes him to be the vengeful ghost of the legitimate king. Seized with terror, he begs for mercy and lays the stolen crown at Froila's feet. Estrella arrives, followed by Alfonso, victor over the rebellious troops. The two kings agree to renounce their rights to the throne of Léon and entrust it to the pair of lovers, thus uniting the parties and bringing the holy dictum to fulfillment. The role of Froila, written for the Viennese singer [Johann Michael] Vogel, includes some of the most beautiful parts of the opera – a work in which virtually everything, from beginning to end, is noble, graceful and charming, and reveals the distinguished composer at every turn. One thing alone is missing: the dramatic element.

The opera must be considered a *singspiel* – a sung play – in the fullest sense. It consists of a series of light and pretty vocal pieces sustained in a broadly melodic manner. Every number carries the stamp of Schubert's lyricism, and several could be included in the best of his song collections. One frequently encounters his favorite intervals, cadences, and turns of phrase. But the composer's lack of scenic experience and dramatic understanding is noticeable at every turn, and the musical effect is nowhere strong enough to compensate – for example, with the aid of symphonic merits – for the work's defects. The instrumentation plays a completely subordinate role and is in reality no more than a piano accompaniment arranged for orchestra. The frequently employed viola arpeggios, the so-called *batteries*,²⁶ are especially tiresome as is the monotony with which chords, figures, and passages are doubled by different instruments without ever introducing the slightest episode or variety. Schubert allows the importance of orchestral accompaniment to sink far below the level accorded to it by Gluck and Mozart – not to mention Beethoven. In his songs, on the other hand, the role of the piano cannot be overstated. It effectively unifies the whole: the accompaniment creating a kind of instrumental miniature, a scenic background and decoration for the vocal line. Duets and trios appear here like a series of romances, with the characters singing in turn, one after the other, until, at the conclusion, they join their voices in a small ensemble. So naive and simple, yet so far from adequate!

²⁶ The German equivalent term, *Brechungen*, is defined as arpeggios that include non-chordal notes.

Schubert, so masterful within smaller frameworks, loses much of his natural genius in broader expanses. He did fulfill the important mission of raising the level of lyric composition: endowing it with a hitherto undreamt-of artistic significance, and placing it on an equal footing with the most important artistic genres. But while he expanded the dimensions of lyric poetry, those of the stage exceeded his powers and might have crushed him. The rich, powerful flow of his melodies, when diverted into too wide a channel, proved to lack depth. One might say that the rays of his genius possessed more intensity than range and reached the stage from too far away for the objects to cast the shadow necessary for them to gain shape. Thus, one might compare his opera with *Peter Schlemihl*, who was robbed of his shadow, which is so necessary to give reality to an actual body.²⁷ Here, too, there is melodic invention – as real and true as the living Peter Schlemihl – but one is tempted to doubt its reality, because it does not cast the indispensable shadow.

The libretto admittedly promised little in the way of scenic development; but we may wonder how much better Schubert would have fared even with a better subject. He poured all of his melodic songfulness into this opera; but dramatic contour and declamatory expression are missing everywhere. If any proof were necessary, this demonstrates the different worlds in which the lyric and the dramatic composer move, and reveals the silliness of the generally held view that full possession of all the specialized musical technical skills will suffice to make a person qualified to compose an opera. We have before us not only a significant musician but an exceptionally gifted, brilliant composer who completely misjudged the requirements for scenic effectiveness. This leads us to doubt whether Schubert would ever have fully satisfied those requirements, since the observable results of his attempts at composing for the stage – among which *Alfonso und Estrella* is, if not the last, certainly the most important – support our view. We certainly do not question that highly talented individuals are capable of expressing diverse emotions and feelings in the most varied artistic genres, or even in different art forms. As a matter of principle, we have always argued against the usual habit of pigeonholing artists into one specialized category or another, and then negatively prejudging any works of theirs belonging to a different genre from those they have successfully cultivated before. Without adducing the example of a Mozart, a Michelangelo or others, we reject the notion that one can classify artists like shops or cities, which become famous for certain foods or delicacies, some

²⁷ Peter Schlemihl's wundersame Geschichte, by Adelbert von Chamisso.

because of their wine, others by virtue of their cheese, some on account of their pâtés, others because of sweets. Still, it would be a mistake not to realize that a genius is not always capable of handling all the genres of an art form. Just as the forms of nature – not to mention all of our emotions – individual art forms likewise have their *raison d'être*; and each one will be most brilliantly and completely developed through the inspiration of a specially gifted genius. We admired in Chopin the example of an extraordinary ability to limit oneself to the most congenial boundaries.²⁸ Schubert affords another. In his extraordinarily creative life, his attempts at dramatic and symphonic works can only be considered secondary. For someone of his predisposition, the theater especially encompassed too wide a scale. Moreover, the dramatic texture demanded by the stage was too complicated for his impulsive and direct inspiration.

It is one thing to express emotions in limited yet sharply distinctive shapes, in pleasing yet brief formulas, in energetic yet concise expressions that one might call aphorisms of the heart; it is another thing to incarnate these emotions in fictitious personages; to show them maintaining a consistent, firm character amid conflicting actions; to give them, in complicated situations, a forceful, individual language, a true inflection which, amid struggles, reveals their emotions. Schubert had in the highest degree the gift of dramatizing a lyrical inspiration. He knew how to extract from short poems the entire quintessence of feeling, the compelling power of the emotions by bestowing on the pains, joys and sentiments – often more revealed than depicted in a few lines – a power of expression, dazzling brilliance, penetrating intensity, wonderful delicacy and a glaze of color, so that we see them flare up before our eyes and take possession of our souls. Schubert makes us enjoy the blissful – or bittersweet – aftertaste of the impressions, which, like drops of a magic elixir, he pours into our hearts. Within the short duration of a *Lied* he transforms us into observers of rash but deadly conflicts; he lets us behold and hear the broken sighs and overflowing tears of agony or feel the throbbing pulse of blessed love, leads us through all the misery and sorrow of hopeless pain, or lifts us into the regions of the ideal and infinite. Would he ever have reached the same goal within an expanded framework and increased scale of his protagonists?

²⁸ See Liszt's monograph on Frédéric Chopin.

Moral constitutions, like physical ones, are diverse; intellectual qualities and advantages are just as manifold as corporeal ones. Sometimes the eye is sharper and more acute – sometimes less so; the ear more – or less – accurate and true. In some individuals the muscles are better developed, in others, the nerves. In one temperament, melancholy, dreaminess and feeling prevail; in another, reflection, conjecture, calculation. Here, intense yet momentary passions; there, quiet yet lasting ardor. Some exude a rich simplicity, like single-stringed instruments; others create a fully harmonious sonority. The latter temperaments are the rarest: Only to them is it granted to encompass what appears to be mutually exclusive: to combine the most heterogeneous qualities, to be at the same time spontaneous and reflective, enthusiastic and erudite, forceful and gentle, vivacious and profound. Those who wish to choose the stage as their domain must belong to the ranks of the latter; for while lyric poetry is, for the most part, subjective; dramatic works require that character and action be objective. Therefore, it is more likely that a dramatist will distinguish himself as a lyric poet than that a lyrical nature will successfully take hold of dramatic elements. And especially since all the qualities of the tragedian are demanded of the musician who wishes to master the stage, one will encounter as rarely among us musicians – as among writers – talents who are endowed with the requisite range of intellectual gifts. Before one endeavors the creation of dramatic works, a more serious testing of powers will increasingly prove to be of the utmost importance.

Schubert was destined to render an extraordinary service, albeit indirectly, to the dramatic Muse. He has perhaps exercised a greater influence on operatic style than has hitherto been recognized. By employing and shaping harmonic declamation in a more highly intensified manner than even Gluck had done, he raised it to a power and energy not before considered possible in the *Lied*, and, by virtue of its expressivity, succeeded in glorifying poetic masterworks. In this way he disseminated and popularized the art of declamation, facilitated its acceptance and understanding. By teaching us to value the amalgamation of noble poetry and profound music, he imbued the latter with the emphasis on pathos inherent in poetry; he gave poetic thought a home, as it were, in the realm of music – intertwined them like body and soul – and thereby inspired only disgust and aversion toward the kind of vocal music that clings annoyingly to bad verse – verse without heart or spirit.

Schubert's nature sang out in the purest way: full of vitality and life. He was ablaze with divine fire and anointed with the holy oil of the spirit. But his heavenly Muse, her glance lost in the clouds, preferred to let the folds of her azure mantel stream over heavenly regions, forests and mountains, in which she wandered about capriciously – now prancing, now in deep thought: unaware of the artfully winding path the dramatic Muse gingerly traces between backdrops and foot lights. Schubert's winged verse felt an uncanny fear of the clattering of gears and stage machinery. Schubert is more like a mountain stream that breaks free from the bosom of a snow-covered mountain peak and in steep, frothy waterfalls inundates the rocky descent with a thousand colorfully sparkling drops than he is like a majestic river that waters the plains and reflects the images of cathedrals on its mirror-like surface. He is, and remains, great in art because – as in nature – greatness, nobility and the sublime are not measured in terms of material dimensions; because art's creations are not measured in terms of the size and weight of commercial products but according to those intangible laws whose secret the human mind possesses, but cannot unveil.

Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*

I

Of the three works by Wagner in which a turn towards a new dramatic style is readily discernible, *The Flying Dutchman* was the last to be performed in Weimar, though as the first in chronological sequence, it opens the series of his newer compositions. In Berlin the opera was given as early as ten years ago. Spohr staged it later in Kassel, due to the singular impression the score had made on him. At the time, however, Wagner was still viewed as just one among several more or less talented composers. The reformer had not yet planted the banner whose motto was completely unfurled after *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. When listened to without a preparatory introduction, without thrilling anticipation and rapid understanding of the novelty it represented, *The Flying Dutchman* gave the impression of a work whose profound sorrow and somber simplicity were not suited to the stage. This is all the more understandable when one considers that in this work Wagner grasps only instinctively the form he was destined to create, whose poetics he later formulated with that power of conviction that is one of the characteristics of his intellect. On the other hand, the work enjoyed a brilliant success two years ago in Zurich, under the direction of the composer himself who knows how to electrify and sweep along both artists and the public into understanding his intentions. A consensus of German public opinions holds that, since *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, Wagner counts among those men whose intellectual creations command attention. Yet only a few theaters have welcomed *The Flying Dutchman* into their repertoire, even though it can be performed with little scenic expense. As the first attempt within a system that has since become known in its full scope, the work now holds more interest and offers richer points of view for its evaluation than was the case earlier, when it appeared in isolation.

By virtue of his double artistic talent Wagner feels naturally drawn toward lyric declamation and concentrates his efforts on a single point, whose difficulties Rousseau already characterized when he declared: "A great and beautiful problem resides in the question: to what extent can speech sing and music speak. The entire theory of dramatic music depends on a correct solution to this problem." But unlike Rousseau, Wagner is not content with formulating the problem; he

sets out to solve it. We have already indicated briefly elsewhere³⁰ Franz Liszt, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Detlev Altenburg, Leipzig (Breitkopf & Härtel) 1989, vol. 4, “Lohengrin” und “Tannhäuser” von Richard Wagner] how he reached this goal and will only repeat here – in order to clarify our observations about *The Flying Dutchman* – that one of Wagner’s most important and characteristic methods is to characterize the leading persons or situations of the drama by means of specific musical motifs [leitmotifs] that return whenever the person thus characterized is prominent, or the situation is repeated or referred to. The distribution of these important motifs already occurs in *The Flying Dutchman*. Depending on the course of the action, they return in different keys, timbres and rhythms – now plaintive, now transformed into radiant song – always according to the instances of the action which depict the agony or elation of the heart, whose anxious or joyous heartbeat reverberates in the motifs. There is no denying that a noticeable gap exists between *The Flying Dutchman* and Wagner’s later works. In the former his musical conception is not yet nearly as strong or firm. One can see how he is trying to shake off the idols to whom he, too, had made offerings, but is not yet fighting them to the death. Only here and there does he dare to step forth in his brilliantly grand style. Only timidly does he resist the tyranny of inherited forms, still allowing them room, not yet rejecting them systematically as he would do later. But even if *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* had not followed upon *The Flying Dutchman*, the distinctive merits of this work would suffice to assure Wagner a prominent place among the creative spirits of our time.

It is, above all, the depth of poetic feeling that springs forth from Wagner’s inspiration, the shape and logic of the characters he depicts that must be admired. The work under discussion possesses these qualities to a high degree, although the thread of dramatic action is less strongly connected. If Wagner had not told us (in the *Preliminary Remarks to his Friends*, which act as preface to his three *operatic poems*) that the subject of this opera did not originate with him, we would recognize it from the ballad-like course of the whole, from the dearth of effective stage situations, from the almost extreme restraint in the use of dramatic motives.

³⁰ See Franz Liszt, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Detlev Altenburg, Leipzig (Breitkopf & Härtel) 1989, vol. 4, “Lohengrin” und “Tannhäuser” von Richard Wagner.

During a journey at sea, Wagner read the sailors' legend in the version that Heine had narrated.³¹ The confluence of reading these lines and having to endure a violent storm engendered in Wagner – himself shaken by much internal turbulence – the idea of a dramatic treatment of the material. He carried it out without changing anything essential in Heine's moving story. The legend is well known. A long, long time ago, a Dutch vessel, circumnavigating the Cape of Good Hope, was held back by a persistent storm. When the sailors pleaded with the captain to turn back, he called out: "I shall never do it though I must sail for all eternity." In punishment for this blasphemy, he is condemned to roam the seas until doomsday and to bring ruin to all ships he encounters. The angel of mercy, however, makes known to him that every seven years he will be permitted to come ashore and to wed. If his chosen bride should be unfaithful, she too would be damned; but if he should find a wife who *loved him unto death*, her faithfulness would redeem him and open the doors to eternal salvation after his mortal passing. According to Heine's story, a young Norwegian maiden, having learned from a folk ballad of that divine verdict, has always felt the deepest compassion for the lot of the ill-fated captain. One day he lands on Norway's shores to seek a bride. She recognizes him and swears loyalty to him, utterly resolved to keep her oath. The Dutchman is overwhelmed by love and grateful for her beauty and devotion, but fearing he might expose her to the danger of perjury, he abandons her, renouncing his long-desired hope to be finally delivered from damnation. The maiden, however, upon seeing him sail off aboard his ship, throws herself into the sea. At the same moment, his atonement fulfilled, the Dutchman sinks beneath the waves.

Wagner later offered a counterpart of sorts to this subject by spreading brilliance and light into a similar framework and context, which earlier had been filled with nocturnal darkness. In *Lohengrin*, as in *The Flying Dutchman*, an unknown man appears, brought by a wondrous vehicle. The destiny and immortality of both must remain a deep secret. In the former work there is a hero of light; in the latter a protagonist condemned to eternal suffering. The first approaches on a barque agleam with gold, drawn with majestic, delicate grace by a white swan. He slowly descends onto the river bank filled with astonished onlookers, his silvery armor brightly shining in the rays of the sun. The other arrives in a raging storm; his ship is as black as his garments – black as an eagle covered with gunpowder and blood. He lands on a craggy seacoast, in a

³¹ Heinrich Heine, *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski*, chapter VII.

frightening, lonely night. One renounces limitless good fortune in order to dwell among human beings and to bring them blessings and justice. The other heads toward them in the faint hope that he might attain his salvation and see his guilt washed away through their heroic courage. Wagner portrayed both situations in the most poetic terms. The characteristic motif which reveals the inner meaning of each person's appearance and action is assigned to the Dutchman just as it is to the knight of the grail, and both are depicted in high relief. The first is not disfigured by meaningless frenzy, by the angry outbursts of one possessed, by diabolical curses. Calm, in numb despair, his appearance is all the more overpowering. The inflections of his measured speech, the aura of his lamentation, drenched in bitterness, readily guide our compassion to understand how a woman might offer her life to obtain his salvation – just as the magnanimous presence, the noble manner of Lohengrin allow us to feel that a woman cannot but die once she has lost the empyrean, impeccable hero.

Wagner himself declares that he has glorified women more than any other poet or artist. Indeed, the significance of a woman's mission to submit to self-denial and devotion is hardly felt more deeply anywhere than in his poetry; the idea of *salvation achieved through one's own destruction* hardly more deeply grasped and portrayed than in characters like Elisabeth and Senta. If poetry requires imaginary situations in order to depict (within exceptional circumstances) the full power of devout heroism, all the luster of virtue, all the nobility of renunciation, every infinite pain, the sweep of love, the courage of faith, the martyr's illusion of hope, the enthusiastic audacity of devotion, the affecting eloquence of feeling, then these imaginary situations could not interest us if their emotional content were not truthful – so truthful that our hearts resonate in sympathy.

While no one may believe in the tale of Tannhäuser and Venus's grotto, or still less in the Flying Dutchman and his captain, who would therefore doubt the existence of female characters like Elisabeth, whose love – by virtue of its chaste, death-defying loyalty – is the only link between a fate devastated by violent passions and a world that fears only those passions whose unrestrained declarations spurn hypocrisy? Who does not believe in a Senta, a woman who sacrifices her own life in order to rescue a noble heart from a cruel fate, from the harshest punishment?

This directs our attention naturally to the forms in which devotion is expressed in the present – through the medium of our civilization – and brings to mind the work of a French novelist: an expert in matters of the heart, who could be called the psychologist *par excellence* of our era of mediocrity and half-heartedness. Balzac has attempted to depict the forms this feminine

emotional inclination takes on in our times. *Une fille d'Eve* is the novel in which he portrays a character closely related to Senta (although in completely different settings, circumstances and colors): The Countess Marie de Vandenesse. Both are attached to a worthy man whose qualities seemingly can only lead to their happiness. Both live in amicable and advantageous circumstances. For both the exemplary domestic virtue of a legitimate union becomes a burden. Initially they indulge in a dreamlike affection. But then a violent love is ignited for a soul feared by everyone, shunned like a sinister specter, a being who stands outside their sphere and who has only dread, pain and renunciation to offer, a being whose audacious spirit holds them under such an indissoluble magic spell that – on his account – they gladly endure sorrow and misery, even death. The starting point of their violent emotion is the same. Both turn away, unfulfilled, from a materially bright but lackluster existence, from a tender but monotonous attachment, to a violent desire to rescue an accursed, unappreciated heart with an outpouring of ineffable love. The test of Senta's courage and determination lasts only a few hours, during which she completes the work of deliverance. The Countess, however, has to struggle with a long series of annoyances, with crude obstacles – with the dullest prosaic banality, which enrages the heart more than it frightens the imagination. Senta achieves her aim, while the Countess does not have the strength to overcome the loathing that is more difficult to bear than actual suffering. It is easier to defy the terrors of a poetic Hell than the passions aroused in a prosaic Hell – the accumulated, loathsome difficulties of social life to which noble natures must submit before they can transcend the mediocrities that weigh upon them like leaden waves. For all that, Senta is undeniably driven to death by the same feeling that inspires the Countess when she rescues Raoul from suicide. Both are imbued with a devotion to heroic courage, inspired by the desire to protect a noble nature by sacrificing themselves, suffused by a longing for self-sacrifice that cannot be stilled by living a peaceful and painless life. With both, we are touched by the form that man's noblest urges assume in them, by virtue of which they prefer pain to all enviable treasures and earthly goods, embrace a cult of suffering, and – filled with profound sympathy for the aberrations of passion – wander the earth like visible angels.

An essential difference exists, nonetheless, between the heroine of the German poet and that of the French novelist. The first has preserved purity and innocence in circumstances which allowed her to take command of her fate without offending against duty. The German poet has in mind

nothing but the personification of a noble enthusiasm, a sacred self-abnegation. He is not interested in depicting the shackles by which society reins in these emotions and from which the noblest natures strive – often in vain – to break free and then perish as victims of this unresolved problem: They are confronted, on the one hand, with rigid obligations (often more fruitless than painful or difficult) and, on the other, they strive to realize an ideal of love and self-sacrifice. In the work of the German poet, Senta's rapture is the highpoint of the drama. His task was to portray the magnetic power – the nearly mystical attraction, the harbingers of a deadly vocation – of this mission toward a heroic deed. – The novelist grappled with the task of representing certain noble feelings turned by society into the condition of festering wounds and consumption. He extended his already broad range by means of a kind of pathological examination of all of the ways in which our emotions are subjected to unspeakable ordeals. He could only treat as a subject of analysis and dissection the noble-minded woman who rejects a vapid, unattractive life in the anticipation of a happiness which would be hers as the result of her own destruction undertaken for the sake of the redemption of a significant human being. Wagner opts for phantastic latitude in the depiction of his heroine and adorns her with the loveliest charm. She is a young maiden who knows nothing of the world as we understand it – *fashionable society*. Having grown up on those Nordic coasts, she has absolutely no inkling of it. She is the daughter of a seafarer and of picturesque Norway, amid a sublime landscape and engrossed in its devout contemplation, surrounded by simple, solemn customs. Amid the dangers her family defies daily, she has become familiar with the thought of death; with her soul's driving spirit ever active, she appears like a Northern light in the gloom of our sorrows and wastelands. In contrast to this creation, which has bloomed like a mountain flower, we find in Balzac a grand lady – a woman of the world – born into a man-made environment, growing up in artificially cultivated soil, nourished by substances alien to her nature, lit by the light of false suns, moistened by intoxicating brews, cultivated in a hothouse atmosphere, her early growth trimmed into shape, transplanted in the first bloom into an increasingly seething terrain. Wagner fashions his subject not only seriously but tragically. A life full of pain is comforted and transfigured through the sacrifice of a blessed life. Balzac portrays the same subject with a smile whose irony already becomes clear from the title of his book. He forgets the epigram contained in this very title as soon as he depicts his heroine; and only by the end of the book does one understand the

significance of that title: Curiosity and recklessness, weakness and submission are the features of a fallen daughter of Eve.

It is no doubt true that there are women who appear to be sent forth into the world in order to atone for the sins of the fallen daughters of Eve; but to develop their capabilities a different upbringing would be needed than the world – and especially fashionable society – affords its women from the cradle to the grave. It blames the strongest natures for the sins of Eve, and stifles the budding virtues that could lift them up. One admits, not without a dim sense of the frailty of our³² best qualities, that if Senta – born on the banks of a fjord in those solitary zones of our planet, surrounded by the awe-inspiring spectacle of rough nature, curbed by the majesty and tyranny of a climate that appears to spawn hoar frost and ice merely in order to confine all heat and fire in the human heart – had instead been raised to offer her hand to a young man of high rank, whose life consisted in equal parts of idleness and salon success, then she, too, would no doubt have lost that force of will needed to bring about great things. She would then have justified the words of Hamlet, “Frailty thy name is woman,”³³ or justified anew the title of the book under discussion.

Every grand, divine mission has its Mount of Olives; it has to endure that hour of humiliation and death before the moment of ascension and apotheosis. It is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain the resolve required at that hour – the inspiration, firmness, and persistence – if one has only lived surrounded by dazzling luxury and in the restlessness in which we find ourselves: the consequence of submitting to and observing what the world calls honor, position, dignity, decorum. It is indeed amazing how much strength and vitality are inherent in the noble endeavors of some female natures who are not completely extinguished in such a milieu – natures in whom the noble bud, however weakened, can still be detected. In spite of their different social standing and their quite different natures, the elegantly raised, properly educated Parisian woman can be compared with the tender yet powerful child of the North, since both obey a similar impulse. These two female images belong to the same type. We see in the one its ideal perfection; in the other, it becomes disfigured by reality. The fate of the first strikes us as an

³² The use of the pronoun “our” with regard to women suggests that Caroline Sayn-Wittgenstein wrote and/or enlarged this passage.

³³ English in the original.

ideal to which every noble heart would like to grant reality; the fate of the second as a reality that often renders the ideal impossible.

Balzac devoted his great talent for observing the human heart down to its least perceptible stirrings, as they are determined by the actual state of our society, – virtually the same in the upper ranges of all civilized countries of Europe. He sought to portray, in the smallest detail, images of ravishing opulence; the hidden dangers of certain tropical regions; the severe frost of others; the pallid, delicate gracefulness of those more temperate climes which the Dutch painters recreated with such painstaking accuracy, and whose artistic secrets he appears to have absorbed. But by running through the chromatic scale of all passions and emotions, he does not let us hear the actual, full and true sound of each individual note. We can only perceive it as if through the veil of a distorted clash of a thousand simultaneous notes of an out-of-tune orchestra. The necessary task to which he has devoted himself and – through tremendous literary effort – has so brilliantly solved, may lend a special interest to a comparison of his characters with those that poets create for the sole purpose of depicting emotions in their original form, in their inherent character.

We certainly do not deny the awkwardness of the parallels we have drawn. Wagner's operas are not yet the object of conventional admiration, they have not yet been officially introduced into the *divine realm* of high fashion, they have not yet broken through the walls erected out of consideration for good manners – for the *bon ton* – as a protection against barbaric assaults. For the most part, they are read and studied only by artists and intellectuals who, out of indifference or intellectual pride, remain unfamiliar with the regions that give rise to the Countesses Vandenesse. And if they open Balzac's book out a fleeting desire to read, the photographic accuracy of the portrait will hardly impress them; they will not be induced to ponder how the elements that intersect in this work can be found precisely in every layer of our society – save for some formal differences. Nor will they consider that in the lowest spheres of society an uncommon, abnormal and bold sense of devotion, capable of anything, is usually aroused – and then frustrated – by analogous motives. Do we not meet in every stratum of our society individuals who strive for magnificence with noble ambition and lofty passion, yet recoil owing to the difficulties of reaching it? The manifestation of magnificence in real life fills us with

delight in the same way that a work of art delights us; but in order to create that magnificence in life and in art one must not shy away from the raw stuff of reality. After all, we do not demand from the world more than what it is able to give; and we are satisfied, when – instead of a higher reality – it deigns to turn its perfunctory admiration, its empty sympathy to the ideal. What does art care about the illusory ideal of the world in light of its own superior reality?

II

While Senta is one of the most splendid portrayals of women created in art or depicted in poetry, nonetheless, like Gretchen, like Medora or Gelnar,³⁴ like Ophelia and Desdemona, she is not the principal character of this tragedy. The poets have observed the proper balance of relationships by leaving the female characters in the shadows that lofty heroes cast upon them, yet exalting them through the nobility of their love's object. In Wagner's portrait it is the Dutchman who draws all attention on himself. The eerie light that illuminates everything so gloomily flashes from his countenance. It is because of him that this entire artwork was created. He is the most prominent figure; and we already hear in the Overture the tale, as it were, of his tormented suffering. We perceive his muffled voice from afar; and his hopeless, calm glance seems to pierce the twilight in numb despair.

The instrumental drama begins with the motif that characterizes the curse weighing upon the Dutchman (Example 1). This motif of just a few measures, more rhythmic than melodic, moves back and forth exclusively between the tonic and dominant, omitting the third, and in this way creates the impression of a shadow illuminated by a flash of lightning – a shadow whose gesture stays in our memory. The ear apprehends the return of this phrase each time like a hastily dashed off sketch of this ghost ship and its somber captain. It returns at the work's most intense moments, each time modified with different timbres. Here, at the beginning of the overture, bassoons and horns in unison lend it the character of unappeasable melancholy. Violin tremolos in the upper registers – again kept to tonic and dominant without a third – portray the turbulent waters, carrying away our imagination onto the open sea. Beginning in measure six, this tremolo, intensified by the violins and celli, surges chromatically upward and downward. Waves rising up

³⁴ Heroines in Goethe's *Faust* and Byron's *Le Corsair* respectively.

out of the abyss lift a battle-ready brow to the very brink of the heavens. The long, drawn-out tones of the wind section swell in a crescendo like mountainous waves that expand enormously, slowly rise up covered in snowy froth, and whose crests then tumble down like the peaks of white dunes. The storm rages, the squall groans, the hurricane howls. Accompanied by chromatic scales, the first motif reappears (Examples 2a and 2b) but quickly breaks into separate signals, into cries of distress, which fade away in the distance. With this decrescendo, this first image completes what is in effect the exposition of the instrumental drama. We will be reminded of it in the second act, when Senta narrates the ill-fated lot of the captain.

The stormy introduction gives way to an intimate, tender melodic phrase. We hear the angel of mercy, full of compassion, proclaim to the condemned man the hope which, like a golden thread around gears of iron, winds around his misfortune. We will hear this melody again, from Senta's lips, in the ballad of the second act (Example 3):

Doch kann dem bleichen Manne Erlösung einstens noch werden
One chance remains to gain this poor man his peace and salvation

At that moment plaintive sounds escape from the horns like the last sighs of a waning sorrow. The trombones play a passage moving downwards (Example 4), which returns in the first act when the phantom ship reefs its red sails to land on the coast, where it is to end its spectral journey. The first motif now enters once again in its entirety (Example 5), heralding the somber hero himself, who now addresses us for the first time. Leaning motionless against the mast, he coldly contemplates the undulating surface in the wake of his ship. The sharply blowing morning winds are his confidants, to whom he bemoans his fate, like that fearless Titan crying out in days of old to the *Oceanids* encircling him. Chained to his ship as if to a drifting Caucasus, the new Prometheus sings to himself, in a plaintive monologue, the melody (Example 6) which will form the highpoint of the great aria in the third scene of Act One. With its profound melancholy, its musical eloquence might triumph over the bitter atmosphere of the gloomiest poetry. The first violins, flutes and oboes declaim the following verses:

Wie oft in Meeres tiefsten Schlund
Stürzt' ich voll Sehnsucht mich hinab,
Doch ach, den Tod, ich fand ihn nicht!

I sought the ocean's dark abyss
Trying so desperately to drown,
But no, my death, it was not there!

Da, wo der Schiffe furchtbar Grab,
Trieb mein Schiff ich zum Klippengrund,
Doch ach – mein Grab, es schloss sich nicht!

And where the currents roar and hiss,
I drove my helpless ship aground,
But no, my grave, it was not there.

These strains, full of unassuageable despair, are interrupted by anguished agitation. There follows an enormous rising crescendo, brought forth as if by real as well as metaphorical storms, as though the storms of the soul with their dreadful disruptions might challenge nature's devastations to a competition – certain of victory. The raging of the angry waves already heard at the outset becomes more violent, as if under the burden of increasing fury. All the wrathful outbursts of the storm's violence and of a soul heavy with pain struggle against each other in a deafening tumult, in hoarse noise, in shrill shudders and wild howling, in dissonant battle cries. Muffled sounds, confused voices rise up from the gaping abyss, as if the terrestrial globe split like earthenware cracking in the fire, as if the very framework of the world crackled like fresh wood licked by fiery flames. Shattering thunder roars like a frightful menace; lightning flashes like an image of Death as he plows through the dark clouds and painfully hurts boldly opened eyelids. The crash of the thunderbolt strikes like a vault of gunpowder, as if about to blow up the bronze halls of heaven. Here a surge, a Leviathan, swells and rises; there it overruns another, riding it like a horse; they scuffle with one another like alligators, deceived and thirsty for spoils; they lock gaping jaws with a shrieking clattering of teeth and then dip down into the poisonous, lymphatic lather, yellow with spittle, which washes up around their corpses and out of which they once again come back to life, form anew and rise up like ghastly destroyers.

In the face of these terrors and struggles, under the grinding of the iron work and the creaking of worm-eaten beams the Dutchman remains unchanged and smiles darkly upon the terrible havoc of the storm – a mere reflection of his inner pangs – for he knows only too well that his ship will remain a plaything of demonic powers for all eternity, never to be destroyed by the legions of dangers around him. Like René, he calls out, "Then arise, at last, O long desired storms, you who carry me away to the regions of another life." We see him aboard his everlasting ship, ambling about slowly. "He feels neither rain nor snow, nor the wind that burrows into his hair. He sees the moon making furrows in the waves like a pale ship that navigates the billows, while the life

in his breast is redoubled and a powerful creative force blazes up in him.”³⁵ When hearing these symphonic blasts of sound from the wind section, this whirl of tones that a mysterious rhythm, nonetheless, appears to bring to a cadence, to maintain an elusive harmony, one feels how soothing the raging of the elements can be for those who suffer without hope. They might even desire and yearn for it, since peace offers them only dread and anxiety. One understands how those for whom change is unattainable feel the need to outwit their ardent longing, ridiculed hopes, useless yearning, nagging wishes: by contemplating eternal change. One understands what painful relief it must afford them to hear their groaning of despair, their shriek of scorching pain drowned out by the colossal accompaniment of a pounding nocturnal gale.

After seventy measures of a grand, fantastical fortissimo painted in audacious, *al fresco* strokes, one hears, drawing closer and closer, one of those rhythms with which sailors tend to accompany their maneuvers (Example 7). This same rhythm returns in Act One when the merchant vessel drops and retracts its anchors. In the overture this rhythm is followed by a cheerful, sharply etched song which our imagination ascribes to the crew of a ship that sails, in all innocence, in the fateful wake of the Dutchman, without an inkling of his disastrous proximity (Example 8). It's the song of the sailors of a Norwegian ship, forming a striking contrast between the ease of life, its trivial struggles and worries, and the bleak despair of a fate marked by the seal of doom. Now and then an echo of the Senta motif emerges, as if it wanted to escape from this chaos of destruction, where chasms open and close, mountains of waves rise up and crash down, water columns twist and turn in a mad vortex where, lurching and pounding, the ship rises heavenward now on the starboard, now on the port side. It is first dragged along leeward, then bent windward, and now again sinks down among the waves as if into eiderdown – the waves ablaze from the rays of a sun as if embedded in a bloodstained shroud – and then once again leaps upwards into the air like lava thrust from a volcanic wave. Roaring and seething, the torrential struggle goes on, while Senta's motif wanders about – lost, pursued, cast out – yet unremitting: returning again and again like an angel of light whose flight is hampered by hostile winds and malevolent passions, whose wings beat against the ship's vibrating masts slicing the air, and, finally exhausted, sinks down onto rocky ledges, which the invulnerable keel of the ship brushes against. But the heavenly messenger rises up again, miraculously renewed and strengthened,

³⁵ From the 1802 novel *René* by Francois-René Chateaubriand.

even though painfully pale and restless. Once again it spreads out its wings, lustrous with light and colorful froth, dripping with brine, bitter as the tears with which it is mixed.

The damnation motif returns in all of its intensity; the ship is still undamaged. Old Okeanos watches in amazement that a man-made object resists his lacerating tooth and mauling jaws. And the ship sails and sails endlessly upon the waves that carry it along with foamy patience, taken aback by seeing themselves subjugated – these waves that so inexorably exercise their jurisdiction over life or death, escape or destruction. Strong and secure, a downcast conqueror, the ghost ship pursues its course. Perturbed, it contemplates wounds not received. And has it not become a sentient being? Does it not understand, like the warrior's steed, the call of its master? Does it not share his deep vexation, his somber mood? Is it not filled with his very being and does its bearing not carry the imprint of its master? See how it glides ahead in majesty and melancholy, and then again bent low, like a suffering human being! Slack sails hang down from the great mast like a crimson mantle thrown over the shoulders. Like loosely attached adornments, others are unevenly reefed on the yards, which are still glowing from a bolt of lightning but are as whole and intact as when they left the shipyard. The yards are like needles that ceaselessly weave eternal days from threads moistened by secretly shed tears. The ship, seemingly weary of the burden of its unicorn-like bowsprit, carries on, staggering slightly from side to side like a man drunk more on bile than wine. The black rigging is thrown like black crape over the dark mantle of the hull. As if welcoming death, the mourning flag – ill-fated symbol of life's greed for destruction – flutters and now unrolls its tip like the split serpent's tongue, now cowers onto the mast, like a reptile lying in ambush for plunder.

As the Dutchman sails through the waves, a violent explosion – a thrust from a steep, raging turmoil of waves – finally shakes the ship, drives it forward and holds it fast to a fateful reef. Suddenly, silence sets in; everywhere there is terror and stupefaction. But then the sevenths in the violins ascend like a thousand feathered arrows! The ballad theme gleams, shimmers, emerges and draws near – a radiant meteor. The new final rhythm by which the theme is now sustained (Example 9) is the same that accompanies Senta's words in the opera:

Ich sei's, die dich durch ihre Treu erlöse
Mög' Gottes Engel mich dir zeigen –
Durch mich sollst du das Heil erreichen!

I do, and I shall be the one to save you!
Angel of God bring us together!
Through me you shall be saved!

and which is taken up again at the end of the opera, when the final apotheosis shows us the Dutchman and his angel of salvation, arisen from watery deluge into heavenly glory.

The tempo in which this musical idea first appears lends it the character of elegiac lament, boundless compassion, and pity. The later heroic and fiery rhythm, however, transforms it into a kind of victory fanfare, into a hymn of exultation and jubilation. One might observe a certain analogy between the declamatory style of this overture and that to *Der Freischütz*, where the motif from Agathe's great love aria is also taken up again in faster rhythm, as if, in praise and adoration of love, beams of light were braided into a crown of stars.

This overture, given its content and form, will not become popular as quickly, will not be so easily appreciated, its significance so quickly grasped as may have been the case with the *Tannhäuser* Overture or the introduction to *Lohengrin*. Nonetheless, this gloomy canvas, with its bold, graphic colors and strangely shaped contours, its dense, dark gloom and eerie flashes of lightning, with its tormenting, strained expression of feelings, is hardly less of a masterpiece. What a harrowing drama unrolls there before our eyes! Everything crashing and shattering everywhere! Convulsions of nature and of a heart in despair: raging billows, raging passions, growling thunder and maledictions, angry deluge and a soul in anger, a hissing gale and the angry hissing of scorn! As the ship, a plaything of the stormy sea, rushes along, so the unhappy man hovers amidst the terror of a hopeless anguish. But the strongly built frigate defies the fury of the elements. And the vigor of manly courage is able to brace itself against the thrusts of fate.

Contemporary critics too often measure an artist's talent by how much they sympathize directly with the ideas expressed in his works and the scenes depicted in them. Indeed, their success at times depends greatly on these very sympathies. Unless this goodwill toward a work is immediately awakened, there will rarely be individuals of sufficient sincerity and conscientiousness to venture a timid word in their favor. These works remain subject to a kind of quarantine, because they emerge from an emotional orientation with which the contemporary public is not familiar. Seldom does an advocate appear who will win favor for as yet unacknowledged works, unless there is an incidental circumstance – the sudden predilection of a

famous singer, or an unusual scenic effect – that makes the public more patient and well-disposed. It would be fairer, however, if the small number of real connoisseurs – those capable of judging the worth of a work of art without taking into account its more or less favorable reception – were to unite their energies (leaving to their good fortune those barques that sail along in a favorable wind, even if laden with treasure) and help set on their course those hampered by multiple hindrances.

The artist cannot be held responsible for these circumstances. Especially if he follows a higher inspiration in his creations, his choice of subject matter may deviate from the prevalent taste: he may not bestow on his works the effects that are sought at that moment. The subjects force themselves on his mind as the unavoidable, natural consequence of his very being, his passions, his joys, his pains. He himself does not determine the milieu in which he is born, nor even the individual direction of his genius. Nor is it, therefore, up to him, which forms will grow out of the accidental convergence of the two. The works of poets and artists must derive from the essence of their being. And woe unto those who intentionally pursue a predetermined purpose or premeditated system – who allow themselves to be led more by calculation than by instinct: the latter being the very path that would lead them toward the depiction of scenes and feelings that correspond most to their nature and spirit! Especially with regard to dramatic works, if the Muse elicits from the composer melodies whose sounds do not ingratiate themselves to the first listeners, but which nonetheless indicate a master at work, it is the task of artists and colleagues – whether they are more or less gifted than he – to place all the force of their judgment on the scale of opinion, and to unite all their efforts so that such works are given the praise they deserve: to draw them into the full light of day where they belong.

Unless a given literary period is already inclined toward the depiction of violent characters and scenes, then their portrayal will always run the risk of making the audience feel uncomfortable rather than moved – all the more so, the more significant the work is. Most people lack the ability to sense the beauty inherent in the storms that blow through nature as well as the soul of man. They take more pleasure in the waning thunderstorm accompanied by a distant rumbling of thunder and a gentle summer lightning. God forbid that a bolt of lightning should smash a sacred oak, or a rising flood sweep away temples and peaceful dwellings, lay to waste cornfields and wash away destroyed green meadows along with lovely shrubs and delicately overhanging vines!

The public prefers to look at the illusion of danger, at phantom passions. For them an illusion of pain is enough; they are likewise satisfied with the illusion of happiness.

But Wagner, on the contrary, is neither the poet nor the painter of illusions; he is opposed to half measures, neutral colors, half-hearted situations and characters, and his *Flying Dutchman* is conceived more extreme and bolder than his other works. He identifies with this man whose very existence has become a punishment, who, condemned to live, longs for death, conjures it up like a lover, like a god, and for whom death would be rapture and bliss. He has descended, rung by rung, the mystical ladder that leads into the depths of the abyss from which that rapture springs, where that bliss awaits. He has traversed its endless emptiness, explored its most profound darkness, felt its icy shudders and has grasped its indescribable sorrow. He has expressed what his spirit has experienced there, what his heart has learned, and what his senses have felt. And his utterances have become cries of dread, his color is pale, his compassion unending, his tears are burning and his voice is strained.

Wagner did not call forth the mere shadow of the Dutch captain. He brought back to life his very soul, tormented to the point of numbness, weakened to the point of indifference, for whom the days rush by like the waves of a poisoned river, who is silent like Lara, tormented like Manfred, arrogant like a criminal and quietly suffering like a victim. No poet since Byron has created so pale a phantom in such nocturnal gloom, whose smoldering eyes cast fading glances downward, whose pale white lips twitch in a pained smile, whose fearless brow is lowered in painful exhaustion, who preserves a noble, proud bearing even when his body, broken under the lash of his sufferings, is about to succumb to its own heaviness, and who preserves magnanimity and strength of mind in a flood of suffering.

Only those who can become infused with the somber, emotional grandeur which speaks to us from the long monolog of the captain in the first act, who recognize the noble grandeur of an all-consuming impetuosity, restrained only by barely roused patience, will grasp the poetry of these scenes when hearing the overture to the *Flying Dutchman*, and the opera itself. The calamities in these scenes are dreadful: Whether they rage upon the seas or in human hearts, they are filled with shudders of anguish and the horrors of death – a death this man yearns for in order, finally, to taste annihilation. But death flees from his reach, mocking him; for death would be too enticing a prize for his ambition, too rich a treasure for his yearning, too great a charity ending his misery, too certain a remedy for his limitless misfortunes, too swift an end to his inexorable

fate. Whether one views the symphonic introduction as the depiction of a majestic storm scene on the open seas or as the dramatic portrayal of a soul struggling with powerful, unprecedented afflictions, in both cases one will be seized by an emotion that sets the fibers of one's heart atremble – if one is capable of such feelings.

Wagner would not have been satisfied to have certain individuals or situations appear before us, which could be calmly contemplated or judged with a cold eye. Such a practice would be utterly antithetical to his passionate nature. He seeks the impetus of his passions in the highest regions of emotion, which only few know of, still fewer inhabit, and which only a few chosen individuals can portray. He is not the poet of the crowds who return from the theater with only sensual reminiscences, who do not come away with shattering emotions or lasting impressions. Neither is he the poet for an audience that gladly succumbs to fleeting emotions roused by sharp contrasts, unexpected happenings, clumsy tricks. He demands emotional maturity from his audiences: they must be capable of looking deeply into the suffering heart, of penetrating its inner workings. Whoever goes to *see* a grand opera in order to take home the crumbs of simple, easy melodies (the way a good bourgeois takes home bonbons from a formal dinner) or who sheds easy tears over minor causes can only be bored by Wagner's operas – just as he would be bored, incidentally, by reading Byron or Dante. Fortunately, those works are not read out loud in public; and good manners decree to assume that everyone knows them.

But Wagner, not satisfied with having his works quietly studied and analyzed at home, desires, through staged productions, to have the masses share in the emotions portrayed by him. Yet he scorns, in secret alliance with the Romantic hero, the portrayal of lesser passions and feelings. The protagonists of his dramatic works are chosen people, exceptional individuals. People moved by everyday emotions, as masterly as they may be drawn, are grouped around the principal characters. His chosen heroes are created from the finest materials; and in order to place them in an environment consistent with their subtleties, he feels compelled to transcend the capabilities of human nature and to reach toward the myths and legends of religion and folklore. The Dutch captain, like *Lohengrin*, is impervious to death; *Tannhäuser* intrudes into subterranean grottoes in order to rest in the arms of a goddess; and Siegfried, son of the gods, strides through eternal flames in order to call a Valkyrie his own. Not for the sake of picturesque effects does Wagner endow his heroes with physical traits that will give them a supernatural

aura. Unlike so many others who strive to put on stilts the pygmies created by their imagination, his creations come into the world already larger than life. The language, the immediacy of his characters, persuade us at once that he gave them an interior life that so exceeds everyday emotions that he is forced – by the very nobility of their feelings and thoughts – to place them into miraculous surroundings. In spite of this, however, we do not claim that his heroes cease to be human beings – that they no longer feel and think as human beings do. The stirrings of their souls are accessible to everyone, unknown to few; but he gives them as gigantic a scale as our intellect can grasp and places them in a region that few can attain.

Is it not so with every consummate work of art? And to draw on only one example from the plastic arts, do not the Jupiter of Phidias and the Venus de Milo represent human forms? Yet who could deny that they represent god-like figures? Does it not take, in other words, the poetic genius of Phidias to capture this Jupiter, this god of gods, in all of his stature? When he put before the Greeks this omnipotent god, Phidias was not much concerned whether, in accordance with their myths, a higher power, or fate itself, ruled over Zeus: he was only thinking that envy, discord, all evil have their source in impotence; that the highest benevolence is conceivable only together with the highest power; that the most perfect benevolence arises from the most perfect power and must result in the most sublime wisdom. The serenity of omniscience reigns on Zeus's brow because before his eyes Everything is harmony: no page of the great book of nature remains hidden to him. He perceives – in the gigantic symphony that unfolds before him in time and place – the origin and the resolution of all dissonances. Phidias joined the *Power* of sculpted shape and contour with the *Gentleness* that falls, like dew, from the smiling mouth of the god and united it with the *Wisdom* radiating from his light-giving eyes. One could say that Phidias, with his chisel, revealed and interpreted a theological dogma.

Is it not necessary to be a poet oneself, like the unknown creator of the Venus de Milo, in order to embrace this miraculous ideal, this formulation of the highest beauty, this embodiment of the spiritual, this perfect chord of a divine music that we hear only now and then from afar in a few scattered intervals? Although its form exceeds the normal scale, it gives merely the impression of a perfect, natural size. Life pulsates in her veins with the calm of immortality; health blooms in her, modestly and incorruptible. She seems to lean slightly, gracefully, as if toward love's revelation. Serene majesty reigns in her – as in a hallowed tabernacle. Just as the strings of a

lyre await the hands of a master to resonate, so her lips appear ready to tremble to the breath of ecstasy. Complete understanding encircles her brow, unfurrowed by the mysterious lines of creative thought, without power casting its shadow as on thundering Zeus's brow. Like two blissful currents of fire her eyes would crush a mortal being's breast had they not become the ethereal element in which he himself is transfigured. Her tightly coiled hair trembles gently, full of that electricity that heightens beauty. The fragments of her arms proclaim the power of a firm embrace; one feels that she is able to hold a loved one clasped to her bosom. She holds within her the entire world in all of its loftiness: a wellspring of sublime harmonies, perfect and endlessly diverse consonances and mysterious progressions, a non-corporeal archetype of which her animate appearance is but the transparent garment. There is an elastic roundness to her loins, a testimony to the fertile energy of perfect beauty – the primordial counterweight to all arguments.

Do not these masterpieces satisfy our intellect with more lofty notions than the most brilliant reality can offer to our admiration? Are they not superhuman, preternatural creations? And yet, is there anything in them that is not essentially human or that lies outside of nature? For every art is capable of establishing archetypes that can make various psychological states visible in an idealized abstraction – be it untainted, incorruptible virtue or the most intensely expressed pain. Such incarnations are like concentric prisms³⁶ that reflect the entire luminous abundance of light rays, which we have come to know only as separate hues distributed among different individuals. But art endows man's imagination with its creative ability only on the condition that he wrest her secrets from her and reveal her mysteries. The more elevated the artist's concept of an ideal type, the higher the emotion rises above the superficial receptivity of ordinary people (so that commentaries and explanations are needed to bring both concept and emotion closer to an audience's understanding), the more necessary will it be to clothe concept and emotion in outstanding beauty and perfection.

Despite the constant modifications that different times and places produce in man's intellect, the human heart remains the same; and it will always turn to and be receptive to psychological

³⁶ Also called Fresnel lens: a large circular prism composed of many sections in a frame, often used in lighthouses to create a strong light, visible at great distance.

events, ardently and eloquently expressed, that are innate to its nature. It will never fail to respond to the masterpieces of poetry and the plastic arts, whether they owe their origin to an ever so distant past or an altogether different civilization. Indian poetry and Greek art continue to touch familiar strings within us; they awaken feelings and ideas that never die out. It will always be the beauty of form and style – the magnificent embodiment, in which thought is clothed – which confers immortality. Posterity recognizes not the artist's intention but what he has succeeded in expressing. Only when his idea has found a compelling form – one through which the idea shines forth like a flame through perfect, unblemished crystal – will his work have the sine qua non prerequisite to survive long into the future.

Music, unlike the plastic arts, has no model to imitate and branches out, like architecture, in all sorts of different styles, yielding to constant changes of school, manner and taste and attaching itself intimately to national character. Even more than architecture it runs the risk of its idioms turning into dead languages: that the comprehension of its forms gets lost, that its hallowed hieroglyphs remain baffling signs, that all of its glories sink into the night that precedes a new dawn. Nevertheless, it has been granted to music, through the courageous flights of its great masters and commanders, to strive after so complete a connection between thought and material, that its most perfect monuments – despite every style change – can preserve the power to create effects that correspond to the emotional content that was poured into them. Whatever changes our art form may experience in the course of years or centuries, whatever modifications might occur in the manipulation, organization and unification of the various elements created by these changes, (for example, melodic ideas, harmonic texture, rhythmic motion, unusual timbres, new modulations, and unexpected tonalities), we nevertheless believe that Wagner's works, by virtue of their remarkable beauty and relative perfection of form in which he expresses thought and feeling, will remain the quintessential landmarks of the musical drama of our time. Especially with respect to the great declamatory style, which developed in a time when music commanded the richest instrumental and scenic resources, Wagner's works will remain the most significant achievement.

Wagner has not only expanded the scope of musical drama and the power of its sonorities to the furthest limit that can be absorbed by our senses, he has concentrated so many means of creating effects in his dramas that it requires, on the part of the most attentive listeners, all the abilities to

hear, feel and comprehend in order to synthesize them. He has seized upon all the instrumental effects, vocal groupings and scenic brilliance etc. of his predecessors and applied them to profound subjects whose riches he has developed in a most comprehensive way.

Each of the three works created in his artistic maturity achieves the same in different ways and with distinct poetic devices. In *Tannhäuser* he poignantly depicts the struggle between good and evil, between freedom and authority, between two principles that are so deeply rooted in nature and humanity that their eternal coexistence – which reason's arguments deem impossible – appears to the human mind as the only thing possible. He transfers the great problem of our existence, whose solution is so persistently sought by the titans of human intelligence, into pain-filled regions and pulls the strings with a bold and forceful hand – the mere contact of which would already hurt our vulnerable heart. Thus, as the drama unfolds its solemn and impassioned events, our breath falters as it does while climbing high peaks, and our energies approach exhaustion when the ending ensues: full of sorrow and transcendental joy.

At first glance it might seem that the subject of *Lohengrin* would be less effective. Initially we believe that we might be able to attend a performance of this drama of events and passions more calmly because it does not tell each listener – as happens in *Tannhäuser* – his own history in a kind of poetic parable. But the author has amassed all conceivable artistic devices so extravagantly, has painted with such magnificent colors – with such sublime purity of hues – with such truthful, overflowing life, that the listener, who at first calmly takes a mild interest, in the end forgets himself completely and only lives in the characters whose destiny he sees fulfilled before his eyes. He does not see, as in *Tannhäuser*, a reflection of his own pains, but he must renounce his neutrality and become entirely absorbed in the emotions whirling around him; he experiences them vividly within himself and follows their development so intensely that, by the end of the drama, he is completely shaken.

In *The Flying Dutchman* we do not see ourselves in either of the two situations discussed above. Neither do we recognize much of ourselves in the protagonists, nor do we feel compelled – by the imperious magic of a sensitive and spirited artistic presentation – to abandon our neutrality. In this case the content itself is so profoundly sad; the unfortunate hero, from the moment of his first appearance, is so immeasurably wretched and conveys it in such a darkly lamenting voice that when we hear this tragic elegy – being ourselves familiar with suffering and witnessing such nobly suffered torment – we cannot hold back our tears. Admittedly, the few rays of light in this

stormy canvas, the few bright scenes, allow us moments of calm; but the whole indeed makes an impression of such incurable gloom that at the end one imagines having drained this cup to the dregs.

III

In the first act, when the curtain is raised after the final chord of the overture, the storm continues in the orchestra and becomes visible on the stage. The scene represents a Norwegian seacoast with steep cliffs along the shore. It is night, the sea violently in motion. A merchant ship is tossed about on the waves for a long time and thrown back from the shore. Finally, it lands and drops anchor. Everything is enveloped in the thickest darkness and only lightning flashes reveal the sailors to us, who, as they perform their maneuvers, let us hear one of those monotonous calls, that gives the rhythm to their movements: Hohoje! holloho; ho! ho! halloho (Example 10). Daland, the ship's captain, steps onto the shore to orient himself and finds that the storm has driven him seven miles off from his native port, where he had hoped to land after a long absence. As the wind begins to abate, he allows his crew to rest, does the same himself and entrusts the night watch to a young steersman. Although he is exhausted himself, he bravely attempts to resist sleep, and in order to keep himself awake, strikes up a song in praise of the south wind that will carry the ship back home and to his beloved. The song fades away, interrupted here and there by him gently nodding off; and to the extent that the wind continues to abate, the orchestra becomes gentler and lets the valiant tenor ring out more clearly. But after a few short pauses, a blustering wave lashes the ship once again, and the steersman, wakened from his slumber by the wave's violent thrust, again takes up his song's refrain. To the musician's ear, the restless foaming of the waves, portrayed by strings, especially violas and celli, is extraordinarily effective. This continues through the first and second scenes until the appearance of the captain in the third scene, and these first three scenes create, as it were, a visible portrayal of the overture. The ear rather than the eye seems better able to see the waves swell up powerfully, which, according to the composer's stage directions, rise up as high as towers. There are few masterworks of descriptive art that match the talent for describing a seascape to such picturesque effect, as demonstrated in these scenes. One is tempted to say, as if standing before one of Preller's seascapes: This feels wet! One senses the salty breeze in the air; one

believes breathing in the prickly smell of seaweed, feels the tingling kiss of the Northern breeze, the heavy fog that presses upon the eyelids and makes the hands cold, the light hoarfrost of the Northern latitudes. One hears the jagged flight of the white seagulls that whirl about like bantering sprites, roaming about madly like snowflakes chased by the capricious north wind. One hears the brief, anxiously inquiring cry, the agitated shrieking of the feathered adventurers, the hasty twitching of their wings, signs of their fleeting fright while vacillating between their wanderlust and their fright of the foreboding storm that has barely quieted down. We are transported into one of those regions that have the characteristic smell of the sea. We bathe, so to speak, in the spray that rises up out of the sea. We are numbed by the perpetual rocking on the breast of old Okeanos who remains eternally young with his grace and seductive smile, his amorous and treacherous temptations, as well as the power of his wild fury and blind wrath. The liquid crystal of his immense basin seems to be stirred – in a gently quavering rhythm – by the restless behavior of the underwater giant, dreadful Adamastor,³⁷ whom the fearless Portuguese explorers once encountered, but under another meridian. He calls on all the regions of his kingdom to watch over its frontiers, and with a violent flick of his paw plunges the myrmidons into the depths, or frightens away the insolent intruders into his Sahara, whose solitary vastness he cherishes.

It is hard to tear oneself away from the impression made by this musical seascape. With its abundant picturesque details, it equals the best examples of the most famous marine painters. Never has so masterful a portrait been created for the orchestra; and we do not hesitate to rank it high above all the analogous attempts that can be found in other dramatic works and might be worthy of comparison. We say this without wishing to offend the genius of Mozart or neglect the consideration due to his enthusiastic biographer [Alexandre] Oulibicheff, who speaks about the two storm scenes in *Idomeneo* thus: “Does not Mozart, in the alternating choruses of the castaways and those standing on the shore, tower like a Neptune above his contemporaries, in order to impose awed silence on music lovers and, on his rivals, the silence of despair?” And further: “A welling and seething in the orchestra announces the approach of the monster . . . the eighth-note motion grows more and more vigorous, the violins sound the alarm with harmonies

³⁷ Adamastor is the personification of the Cape of Good Hope, in *The Lusiads* by Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões.

that ring out like storm bells, the phalanx of winds joins in with drawn-out woeful groans . . . a storm in comparison with which the one in Act One was no more than a squall . . . figures rise and fall at the same intervals simultaneously like the pedals of an organ's bellows. In combination with the fluctuations of the 12/8 rhythm, this gives rise to a terrifying image as if the earth trembled under Neptune's hammering. A hail of triplets strikes those in flight; darkness surrounds them, the tempest drives them in all directions before it, lightning stuns them with its brilliance – this is incomparable, sublime!" The following words precede this analysis: "Mozart orchestrated none of his operas with such wealth and extravagance. Everywhere there is opulence bordering on waste. He wanted to make use of everything that could possibly find a place in an orchestra."

We leave it to any fair-minded musical artist to compare the two scores (we would love to say the two performances), in order to vouch that, given the material progress in art, today's genius can achieve effects that the old masters could barely imagine. By a greater and more intense reproduction of the effects that grand natural dramas arouse in us, music can further expand its broad scope more or less the way the art of painting did at one time by setting aside the gilt background – which in the Middle Ages had replaced the simple Pompeian primary colors with more splendor – in order to attempt a vivid landscape vista. First used as a surrounding for groups of individuals, the practice later developed as an independent branch of art.

The young sailor has bravely fought against sleep, but drowsiness finally overtakes him. During a moment of pause in the storm, he falls asleep – so soundly that he does not notice the newly awakened storm, the deluge that the orchestra pours over him. Meanwhile the plaintive fatal melody breaks out of the dense clouds and announces to the quarreling powers of nature the approach of a higher power: one that mocks their devastation and withstands their adversity. Black, with red sails, the ghost ship draws near from afar. Swiftly it sails on – unrestrained by the redoubled thrusts of the wind, the headlong flashes of lightning, the turmoil of the grumbling, intractable waves, the din of the thunder – until it lands across from Daland's ship. On the upper deck one perceives a group of sailors dressed in black, with long white beards, and lean, haggard miens. They, too, drop anchor, but in solemn, gloomy silence. Paler than all of them, the captain remains motionless for a long time, resting against the mast, until he steps out of his prison, which will stand waiting to receive him once again. He slowly climbs down onto land, noticing

with sadness the surrounding scene. Out of the orchestra rises the damnation motif, which throws a subdued light over him, as of a solar eclipse, and appears to isolate him from all living beings. Leaning against a rock, with painful indifference, he sings in a hollow voice that speaks of the agonies of centuries:

Die Frist ist um, und abermals verstrichen
Sind sieben Jahr. – Voll Überdruß wirft mich
Das Meer an's Land.

The term is up. Once more the seven years
have run their course. The jaded sea casts me
upon the shore.

Between each single outcry there arises from the orchestra a frothy surge, as if meant to signify again and again a new seven-year period of damnation, each time rising and once again sinking down into the limitless past. With blazing fury he then calls out:

Ha stolzer Ocean! In kurzer Frist sollst Du mich wieder tragen.

Ha curb your arrogance! It won't be long before once more you bear me!

A cry of despair emerges from these words:

Dein Trotz ist beugsam, doch ewig meine Qual!

Your threat may waver, my pain can never end!

Immediately, however, he gains the composure of a dull defiance against the severity of fate; with steady firmness he utters the words:

Das Heil, das auf dem Land ich suche,
Nimmer werd' ich es finden. –

Once more I come to seek salvation,
But I shall not find it

Threatening, as if he were about to challenge fate into battle, he cries out sardonically:

Euch, des Weltmeers Fluthen
Bleib' ich getreu, bis eure letzte Welle
Sich bricht und euer letztes Nass versiegt.

You eternal ocean
I am your slave, until the final breaker
Is still, and every drop has drained away!

After this recitative full of the pride of a suffering soul, a new gust breaks out of the orchestra; the waves rise up – as horses rear when they pick up the scent of a supernatural being approaching – and the Dutchman pours out his proud lament in the *arioso agitato*, more

melodious than when it was heard in the overture. The recollections of what he suffered crowd his mind, and he is no longer able to stifle his heart-wrenching lament:

Wie oft in Meeres tiefsten Schlund
Stürzt' ich voll Sehnsucht mich hinab: –
Doch ach! den Tod, ich fand ihn nicht!
Da, wo der Schiffe furchtbar Grab,
Trieb mein Schiff ich zum Klippengrund: –
Doch ach! mein Grab es schloss sich nicht! –

I sought the ocean's dark abyss
Trying so desperately to drown: –
But no, my death, it was not there!
And where the currents roar and hiss,
I drove my helpless ship aground:–
But no, my grave, it was not there!

He adds, in goading tone, as if he, a foolhardy combatant, were summoning a host of mortals to battle:

Verhöhrend droht' ich dem Piraten,
Im wilden Kampf hofft ich den Tod:
“Hier” – rief ich – “zeige deine Thaten!

I dared the pirates to do battle,
In violent death I sought relief:
“Hear my challenge! Come and show your
mettle!

Von Schätzen voll ist Schiff und Boot.”
Doch ach! – des Meer's barbar'scher Sohn
Schlägt bang das Kreuz und flieht davon.–
Nirgends ein Grab! – Niemals der Tod!
Dieß der Verdammniß Schreckgebot. – –

The ship is rich beyond belief!”
But no, the brutes begin to pray.
They cross themselves and slink away.
Nowhere to lie! Never to die!
This is damnation's dread decree. – –

After having risen in ever more excited fury and angry indignation, remembering his dreadful punishment, he collapses after these words, giving way beneath the burden of his persecution. Silent for a moment, as if utterly destroyed, he casts a glance upwards – a glance audacious, rigid and searching – to the implacable heavens, which at this moment are wrapped in a thick veil of dark brown clouds. The 6/8 meter changes to 4/4. The orchestra persists with its *tremolando* of basses and celli, joined by the violas in their lowest register and supported, in alternation, by bassoons, clarinets and kettledrums; after a few measures, the trombones, in their low register, join them. This moment is one of the most marvelous inspirations of which the Muse is capable, when, under the banner of pain, she struggles against the walking corpse of despair. Majestically

wrapped in his despair, cold and yet moved, the Dutchman asks, like a plaintiff before the powers that sit in judgment, eternally deaf to his laments, eternally blind to his suffering:

Dich frage ich, gepriesner Engel Gottes,	I ask of you, supremely blessed angel,
Der meines Heils Bedingung mir gewann:	you who revealed my vision of release:
War ich Unsel'ger Spielwerk deines Spottes,	Was I your plaything, mocked and then deluded
als die Erlösung du mir zeigtest an?	When you awoke my only hope of peace?

Hope, like a galvanic current once more igniting, finally seems to completely expire. Like tigers smelling blood the waves leap up, and – more fortunate than he – break on a steep wall of rock, whereas no danger can destroy the unfortunate man's accursed body:

Vergebne Hoffnung, furchtbar eitler Wahn,	The hope is futile! Vain to dream of death!
Um ewige Treu' auf Erden – ist's gethan.	Eternal love has vanished – from the earth!

And once again he succumbs to the utter breakdown of all energy and sinks down into hopeless silence. Yet, in a final summoning of manly strength and proud courage, he seems to gather the shattered parts of his tormented soul, and, consolidating them anew, he pulls himself together – like a snake before the deadly flames, from which it can no longer escape. Now he summons the last infallible goal of his suffering: the gloomy postponement, the third and last metamorphosis of the siren of Hope. He had foolishly believed that he could avoid heaven's condemnation and find death on his voyages. He had come to understand, in despair, that he was searching in vain for angelic compassion, for human virtue and a love and devotion that might open to him the gates of salvation. Now he hopes that the day of great destruction will grant him his long-awaited annihilation.

Nur eine Hoffnung soll mir bleiben	A single ray of hope consoles me,
nur eine unerschüttert stehn:	a single firm belief remains:
So lang der Erde Keime treiben	the earth that puts forth growth and blossoms,
So muss sie doch zu Grunde gehen ...	must also turn to dust again ...
Tag des Gerichtes, jüngster Tag!	Day of Judgement! Glorious day!
Wann brichst du an in meine Nacht?	When will that dawn break through to me?

Wann dröhnt er, der Vernichtungsschlag,
Mit dem die Welt zusammenkracht?
Wenn alle Todten auferstehn,
Dann werde ich in Nichts vergehn ...
Ihr Welten, endet euren Lauf!
Ew'ge Vernichtung nimm mich auf!

You, herald, bid the trumpet play!
Announce the world's catastrophe!
And at the rising of the dead,
The void will close about my head...
You planets, you have run your course!
Endless oblivion I am yours!

The rhythm of this last outcry (Example 11) has a stabbing effect. In the eight principal measures of the motif, which are repeated four times, the rhythm drags itself along, twitching and grinding, from a double-dotted half-note in alternation with an eighth (Example 12). “Endless oblivion we are yours!” comes the answer – in hollow funereal tones from the floating cavern of the ship – as if from a group of the eternally damned. With a hint of furtive reproach, the invisible crew seems to pile up the wrath for its own ruin upon his head, a crew that after so many fruitless attempts is as devoid of hope as the Dutchman himself (Example 13). Between the last words of the captain and the lament-like refrain of his crew, the damnation motif, like a verdict, rings out again from the orchestra, repeating the appeal of the Dutchman in full sonority (Example 14) and the sailor's refrain like a distant echo (Example 15).

This monologue must be considered one of the most significant in the musical repertoire. Here powerful thoughts and feelings continually go hand in hand; they touch the extremes without indulging in any excess: without becoming morbidly distorted or slackening from an overly long, sustained tension. Here all the gradations of suffering are explored: stoic composure, fury and outrage, irony and sarcasm and ultimately a longing for annihilation. The expressive and forceful tonality of C minor persistently returns – a monotonous lament – after the most daring modulations, representing the ever-recurring pains. In the many pauses that interrupt the unfortunate man, the orchestra comments on his utterances – which are too brief to express such prolonged pain – and comes to his aid when the human voice is insufficient to express the full intensity of such unspeakable anguish. The music of this scene, in a highly emotive style, affects the listener in a way that poetry cannot. Poetry can only identify and communicate to us the sorrows that reside in another human breast; music lets us truly experience them. It somehow fills our veins with a portion of their mordant venom and, for a few moments long, lets trickle

into our soul, a drop at a time, the bitter sap of the disease that rages in another's breast. A new Virgil, the musician can lead us by the hand through the circles of hell hidden within a human heart and illuminate for us the many forms of its suffering.

Roused by the first rays of the sun, Daland catches sight of the ship that has appeared during the night; he hails it through a megaphone but in vain, for no one answers him except for a mournful echo that sends back the sound of his own voice. Then he notices the Dutchman leaning against a rock, thoughtfully observant yet also distracted, and decides to approach him and asks him where he comes from. The pause that follows this question is filled out with gripping harmony (Example 16). "From far I come," responds the Dutchman with profound melancholy:

Verwehrt bei Sturm und Wetter
Ihr mir den Ankerplatz?

In storm I sought an anchorage –
Would you refuse it me?

Daland responds: "God forbid! . . . but where do you come from? Did you experience damage in the storm?"³⁸

A profound grief seizes us when the Captain answers:

Mein Schiff ist fest, es leidet keinen Schaden. –
Durch Sturm und bösen Wind verschlagen,
Irr' auf den Wassern ich umher, –
Wie lange? weiss ich kaum zu sagen:
Schon zähl' ich nicht die Jahre mehr.
Unmöglich dünkt mich's, dass ich nenne
die Länder alle, die ich fand: –
Das einz'ge nur, nach dem ich brenne,
Ich find' es nicht, mein Heimathland! –

My ship is sound, it seems it can't be damaged.
The storm and wind cannot appall me,
I must go on not knowing why,
My journeys, I cannot recall them:
Year after year just passes by.
I can't imagine or remember
The many lands that I have known:
The only one I seek forever –
Cannot be found, my final home.

³⁸Here and elsewhere Liszt's essay uses an earlier version of the libretto, which has minor deviations from the final, authorized version. Compare Liszt's "Hast du im Sturme Schaden nicht genommen?" with the final „So trieb auch Dich der Sturm an diesen nackten Felsenstrand?“ We follow the wording, spelling and punctuation of Liszt's essay.

Beginning with the words: “Durch Sturm und bösen Wind verschlagen” there arises a strange cantilena of forty measures, accompanied by a figure in the violins and celli in eighth-note motion and supported by long held notes in the clarinets, horns, bassoons, violas and basses (Example 17). This chant-like song of mourning gives the impression of pains frozen into the conventional form, in which they are presented to the outside world – after we had followed them in their wildest outbursts. These forty measures resemble the languid, colorless waves of a dead sea. The Dutchman continues:

Vergönne mir auf kurze Frist dein Haus,
und deine Freundschaft soll dich nicht gereu’n:
Mit Schätzen aller Gegenden und Zonen
Ist reich mein Schiff beladen: willst du handeln,
so sollst du sicher deines Vortheils sein.

Oblige me then and let me be your guest.
You won’t regret the day you were my friend.
My ship is fully loaded with a cargo
Of precious stones and jewels: if you wish to,
You have the chance to make a handsome profit.

He orders a chest be lowered from his ship. It is opened before Daland who, dazzled by the sight of gold, pearls and precious stones, regards the treasures with a look of innocent greed. The honest Norwegian asks, as if in a trance, who could ever offer a sufficient amount for such treasures? The Dutchman answers:

Den Preis? So eben hab’ ich ihn genannt: –
Diess für das Obdach einer einz’gen Nacht!
Doch, was du siehst, ist nur der kleinste Theil
Von dem, was meines Schiffes Raum
verschliesst.

Was frommt der Schatz? Ich habe weder Weib
Noch Kind und meine Heimath find’ ich nie!
All meinen Reichtum biet’ ich dir, wenn bei
den Deinen du mir eine neue Heimath giebst.

The price? It is exactly as I said:
This is the payment for a single night!
But what you see is just the smallest part
Of all that’s lying hidden in the hold.

What use is gold? I have neither wife
Nor child, and I shall never find my home!
I gladly offer all my wealth, if you
Would only let me make my home with you.

“I am bewildered,” says Daland. “You have a daughter?” asks the Dutchman. “Indeed, a loyal child,” Daland answers. “Let her be my wife,” responds the Dutchman. “What? My child your

wife?" Daland exclaims, who is increasingly fascinated by the gold, lost in his contemplation of the precious jewels carelessly spread out at his feet. The Dutchman sings:

Mich fesselt Nichts an die Erde!	All ties of love are denied me!
Rastlos verfolgte das Schicksal mich,	Only the restless pursuit of fate
Die Qual nur war mir Gefährte.	Whose hatred is always beside me.
Nie werd' ich die Heimath erreichen:	My home is the wind and the water:
Zu was frommt mir der Güter Gewinn?	My wealth can bring no joy any more,
Lässt du zum Bunde dich erweichen.	But if I could marry your daughter,
O! so nimm meine Schätze dahin.	Oh, then all I possess would be yours!

Daland yields to the magnetic attraction of the gold spread out before him ready to be seized; he upbraids himself, wrangles with himself that he could possibly, if only for an instant, contemplate letting go of a fortune that appears to him like a dream.

Fast fürcht' ich, wenn unentschlossen ich blieb',	I must decide or he might change his mind,
Müsst' er im Vorsatze wanken.	I dare not even delay it.
Wüsst' ich, ob ich wach' oder träume!	Surely, he's the man she should marry!
Kann ein Eidam willkommener sein?	Could all this be a marvelous dream?
Ein Thor, wenn das Glück ich versäume:	A fool would ignore such a good fortune!
Voll Entzücken schlage ich ein.	I shall very gladly agree, very gladly.

Wagner's lofty emotional perspective prevented him from crossing the threshold of caricature by softening the mercantile tone with the gentle words of the father. That egoistic tone, a thousand times ridiculed and reviled, never abandons greed or shopkeeper's habits. Daland, at least, has a semblance of dignity, provided by his good-natured affection for his daughter.

Wohl, Fremdling, hab' ich eine schöne Tochter,	Yes, stranger, I possess a lovely daughter.
mit treuer Kindeslieb' ergeben mir.	Her childish heart is full of love for me.
Sie ist mein Schatz, das höchste meiner Güter,	She is my pride, the best of my possessions,
Mein Trost im Unglück, meine Freud' im Glück.	she soothes my troubles and inspires my joy.

The Dutchman responds with an eerie, heart-wrenching emphasis:

Dem Vater stets bewahr' sie ihre Liebe,	And may she never cease to love her father
Ihm treu, wird sie auch treu dem Gatten sein.	True love may she then give her husband too

A recurrent word in this scene, *Treue*, loyalty or faithfulness – so frequently overused and rendered banal – here has the sound of a death knell.

Du giebst Juwelen, unschätzbare Perlen,
Das höchste Kleinod doch, ein treues Weib –

You offer jewels, priceless pearls and diamonds
But I am offering more: a faithful wife –

Daland answers now, partly in the friendly yet wary tone of a father, partly like a merchant extolling his goods. “You give her to me?” asks the strange suitor once again. “Thy fate has moved my heart” answers the Norwegian, who, though clumsy in a rustic way, does not lack motives for varnishing the agreed-upon sale of his daughter. To him *the Dutchman’s generosity is proof of his noble heart* rather than a reason for making him suspicious that it might perhaps be a trap for Senta. But as he speaks the truth when he admits that he has wished for just such a son-in-law, he also believes he is being truthful, inasmuch as he persuades himself that he would have chosen no one else even if he were not so prosperous. He comes to an agreement with the Dutchman to take advantage of the first favorable wind to land at Daland’s home port.

This dialogue is carried out splendidly and forms a rather natural, although quick transition to the fateful betrothal. While the merchant takes delight in his good fortune, praises the storm that has diverted him from his course at so fortunate a moment, and congratulates himself for so enviable a son-in-law – one conforming to all his wishes – the unhappy captain, with a sorrowfulness that borders on loathing, begins a new trial, driven to a new challenge by Foolish Hope, who has escaped with all the other evils from Pandora’s box. “Though hope has left me, I embrace hope yet again!” he cries out.

One cannot deny that the bond between these two men, which becomes one of affection during the course of the masterfully constructed final duet, produces an unpleasant moral dissonance. Perhaps it was the impression made by one of Byron’s gloomiest poems that prompted Wagner to contrast a fantastical figure like that of the Dutchman with the simple, rough nature of a Daland. The scene between Manfred and the alpine hunter, however, rests on a different moral foundation: it refreshes the imagination instead of upsetting it. The simple man, no matter how remotely able to comprehend Manfred’s suffering or the possibility of suicide, creates no harsh contrast with the noble knight whom he rescues, because both are, in their own way, proud and

noble. With the English poet we face the harmonious contrast between two types of poetry: the instinctive and the reflective; with the German, a harsh contrast between ordinary prose and the most melancholic poetry. The two characters are too dissimilar, with too great a distance between them for the effect of their blended voices not to seem forced, indeed operatic. While the one rises to the level of tragedy, the other utters musical commonplaces deliberately put into his mouth and perfectly conveying the commonness of his character.

Taken as a whole, the behavior of the Dutchman conveys calm, quiet dignity: he expresses himself with moderation: nobly, without harsh tones. He acts and speaks according to old habit, for he has experienced similar encounters and transactions many times before! Everything, even the seemingly most calculated of his questions and answers, seem to be automatic. He appears to be acting under the pressure of his predicament, to which he surrenders mechanically and impassively – as if exhausted. Yet, just as inevitably, his yearning for salvation awakens once again. Casually, still with apparent calm, he asks, “Do you have a daughter?” Daland’s enthusiastic response, “I have, and she is dear to me” suddenly draws him, yet again, toward that eternal hope, which he has so often experienced in vain! As if with frantic haste he cries out: “Then give her unto me for wife!” Wagner, in this way, even captures the Dutchman’s inner agitation and the manner in which it is manifested during the course of this encounter.

In Daland, on the other hand, we find no nobility of feeling. His is just the conventional bourgeois attitude, without root or strength – like a water plant that is easily torn apart by whatever random event comes along – and, at the moment of its dissolution, does not even feel its death. Nonetheless, Wagner has left Daland many ways of escape in order to preserve the propriety of the character. In a small publication on the staging of the opera addressed to theater directors,³⁹ he suggests that those who find the scene between Daland and the Dutchman a bit unnatural should only consider how such transactions, in different forms and with fewer pretenses, are typically concluded daily in all classes of society.

The storm has completely calmed down; the hoped-for wind arises, and both ships weigh anchor. Daland’s ship is to show the way and sets sail first. As the anchor is lifted, the sailors intone once again the characteristic, long-held notes that were sung in the first scene when they were

³⁹ See Richard Wagner’s *Bemerkungen zur Aufführung der Oper Der fliegende Holländer*, from which Liszt cites occasionally.

landing: “Hohoje, holloho, hollo, holloho!” after which they repeat in its entirety the young helmsman’s song in honor of the south wind, as it fills their enormous white sails like the wings of a swan. Mixed into the refrain are allusions to the dance rhythms that will be heard at the welcoming celebration in the third act (Example 18). As the merchant ship moves away, the other verses ring out. Carrying out all maneuvers with astonishing rapidity and ease, but in deadly silence, the dark ship with its red sails follows in its wake.

IV

An instrumental intermezzo precedes the second act. Wagner puts a great deal of effort into pieces such as these. His entr’actes are full of brilliant strokes, of delicate poetic effects. In most cases they are narrative continuations or expansions of the dramatic action, in which contrasting or related principal motifs and ideas of the opera in effect narrate what is taking place prior to the beginning of the next act. They are as masterfully handled as the necessary pauses in the action – whether driven by the dramatic course of events or to let the voices rest. At these points the orchestra steps in on its own. Such spaces had usually been filled with meaningless, banal ritornelli, but Wagner treats them with special attention and allows them to assume an important role in unifying the drama. For him such moments complete the physiognomy of his characters: they envelop them like a special aura of their spiritualized passions.

In this case the orchestra resumes the song of the helmsman (Example 19) and the farewell chorus (Example 20). We see honest Daland, surrounded by his crew, sailing off, rejoicing over his booty – the precious coffer that the Dutchman had ordered to be brought onto his ship – happy to provide his daughter with a bridegroom. We follow him until he reaches the harbor, when, in a swift transition, the scene shifts to Senta, and we hear the humming of the spinning wheels and a few notes of the refrain of the song that the young women intone.

A paneled room, decorated in the Scandinavian manner with models of corvettes, cutters and schooners, as well as with colored marine engravings, reveals to us a group of young women spinning. They are singing a charming song to the obbligato accompaniment of the spinning

wheels. Senta takes no part in this. Deeply pensive, filled with gloomy thoughts, she lets her spinning wheel stand idle. Her nurse Mary interrupts the chorus, but the young maidens continue to sing their couplets undisturbed. The humming of the wheel continues on with a sustained trill in the violas, while the second violins join in on the weak beats of the measure with the most delightfully rhythmic mischief until they become impatient with Senta, who remains lost in thought, neither spinning nor singing, paying no attention at all to the presence of her companions. She stares at one of those illuminated portraits typically found in almost every seaman's dwelling, which celebrate a ballad or folk legend. The painting which so completely absorbs Senta's attention represents the Dutch captain as tradition has preserved his memory and living image. Mary chides her for endlessly occupying herself with this ill-fated portrait. The maidens agree with her and scoff at Senta's fancy and the jealousy to be feared from her betrothed, Erik the huntsman. Interrupted in her thoughts and annoyed, Senta asks the nurse to sing the ballad of the Dutch captain for them; but the old woman, who is eerily affected by Senta's daydreaming, rejects the request, horrorstricken, and says solemnly: "Leave the flying Dutchman be!" (Den fliegenden Holländer lasst in Ruh!)- at which point the damnation motif rings out in the orchestra. "You often used to sing the song!" (Wie oft doch hört' ich sie von dir!) replies Senta. In order to repay her friends for having ridiculed her dreamy inclination, her strange sympathy for the unhappy captain, and to arouse their sympathy and compassion for a fate that nobody pities, and whose torments her heart feels so deeply, she sings the ballad herself, exhorting the maidens to *pay close attention to the words*. Nothing suits the curious girls better than to be interrupted in their busy work; they draw nearer to Senta to listen attentively to the song that all of them know but which Senta *sings so beautifully*.

The song begins with its refrain, the damnation motif: an exact repetition of the opening measures of the overture (Example 21) supported by the orchestra with dark, sonorous accompaniment.

Johohoe! Johohoe! etc.

Traft ihr das Schiff im Meere an,

Blutroth die Segel, schwarz der Mast?

Auf hohem Bord der bleiche Mann;

Des Schiffes Herr, wacht ohne Rast.

Hui! – Wie saust der Wind! – Johohoe!

Yohohoe! Yohohoe!

Yohohoe! Yohohoe!

Behold the ship with blood-red sail

Unfurled against her blackened mast.

There stands her master, gaunt and pale,

Who knows how long his watch must last?

Hui! The north wind sighs!—
 Hui! – Wie pfeift's im Tau! – Johohoe!
 Hui! – Wie ein Pfeil fliegt er hin;
 Ohne Ziel, ohne Rast, ohne Ruh! – –
 Doch kann dem bleichen Manne Erlösung
 einstens noch werden,
 Fänd' er ein Weib, das bis in den Tod getreu ihm
 auf Erden!
 Ach! Wann wirst Du, bleicher Seemann, sie
 finden?
 Betet zum Himmel, daß bald
 Ein Weib Treue ihm halt!

Bei bösem Wind und Sturmes Wuth
 Umsegeln wollt' er einst ein Cap;
 Er flucht' und schwur in tollem Muth:
 „In Ewigkeit lass' ich nicht ab!“—
 Hui! — Und Satan hört's — Johohe!
 Hui! — Nahm ihn bei'm Wort! —
 Johohe!
 Hui! Und verdammt zieht er nun
 Durch das Meer, ohne Rast, ohne Ruh'.
 Doch daß der arme Mann noch Erlösung
 fände auf Erden!
 Zeigt Gottes Engel an, wie sein Heil ihm
 einst könne werden:
 Ach! könntest Du, bleicher Seemann, es
 finden!
 Betet zum Himmel, dass bald
 Ein Weib Treue ihm halt'!

Yohohoe! Yohohoe!
 Hui! It shrieks and groans! –
 Hui! Like an arrow he flies,
 Without rest, without aim, without hope! –
 One chance remains to gain this poor man his
 peace and salvation,
 Only a woman true unto death can bring him
 redemption! –
 Ah, haunted man, who can tell when you'll find
 her?
 May God in Heaven grant you
 A wife faithful and true!

The storm wind blew with bitter force
 As once he fought the rising sea.
 He shouted then that reckless curse:
 I'll fight you till eternity!"
 Hui Satan heard, Yohohoe!
 Hui! And took his word –Yohohoe!
 Hui! So condemned he must sail
 On and on, without rest, without hope! –
 One chance remains to gain this poor man his
 peace and salvation,
 Only a woman true unto death can bring him
 redemption! –
 Ah, wretched man, who can tell when you'll
 find her?
 May God in Heaven grant you
 A wife faithful and true

The maidens are moved and join her in singing the last verse; Senta continues with mounting energy:

Vor Anker alle sieben Jahr',
Ein Weib zu frei'n, geht er an's Land: –
Er freite all sieben Jahr',
Noch nie ein treues Weib er fand. –
Hui! – „Die Segel auf!“ – Johohoe!
Hui! – „Den Anker los!“ – Johohoe!
Hui! – „Falsche Lieb'! falsche Treu'!
Auf, in See, ohne Rast, ohne Ruh'!“ – –

Each seven years he lands again,
To seek that true and faithful bride:
Each seven years he seeks again,
But sails alone upon the tide.–
Hui! “So hoist the sail! – Johohoe!
Hui! “Cast off the boat!!” – Johohoe!
Hui! „Love is false, so is faith!
To the sea , without rest, without hope!”

Exhausted from the increasing agitation, Senta collapses into the armchair as if in a faint. The maidens are overcome by reverent compassion: Senta's emotion speaks to them. They join their hands in prayer and sing the end of the ballad softly, in chorus:

Ach! wo weilt sie, die Dir Gottes Engel einst
könne zeigen?
Wo triffst Du sie, die bis in den Tod Dir bliebe
treueigen?

When will the angel find her for you and bring
you together
Who has the love that's stronger than death and
faithful forever?

But barely have they finished, when Senta, as if wakened from her languor by the call of an inner voice, rises, and – over the accelerated rhythm already familiar from the oft-repeated phrase of the overture's conclusion: “Doch kann dem bleichen Manne Erlösung einstens noch werden” – proclaims, in high, piercing tones, the words:

Ich sei's, die Dich durch ihre Treu' erlöse!
Mög' Gottes Engel mich Dir zeigen:
Durch mich sollst Du das Heil erreichen!

I do, and I shall be the one to save you!
Angel of God bring us together!
Through me you shall be saved!

Then, with her arms extended, she turns toward the picture as though it were a living being and rushes toward it.

Everybody shrinks back in terror from the force of this eruptive emotion. Fiction almost becomes reality. The maidens tremble in terror. At this moment, Eric, the young huntsman and Senta's betrothed, enters and announces the arrival of Senta's father. This news brings a complete turn of sentiments and fills every heart with joy. The maidens, like a swarm of quails about to take flight, press together as they rush to meet the crew, among whom is many a sweetheart or brother. But Mary holds them back and admonishes them to first busy themselves with the preparations for the coming feast. The sulky impatience with which the maidens accept this reproach provides the occasion for a lively little chorus, which, though not as fine as the spinning song, will surely lead to applause everywhere because of its irresistibly spirited playfulness. As they finally hurry off noisily, Erik prevents Senta from following them, impresses on her the agonizing impatience with which he longs for the fortunate moment of their union and insists that she beg her father to hasten and confirm it without delay. His words are full of the restless tenderness of those hearts who try more to persuade themselves that their love is requited than actually being sure of it, who find some gap in the principal requirements of their love and are loathe to acknowledge that they are incapable of filling it. It soon becomes apparent that Eric has lately found Senta's love too placid for him to consider her soul entirely in its thrall; he has discerned that she prefers solitude to being in his company, that she accepts his love too much like a gift than as something he could consider mutually exchanged. At first Senta answers evasively but then becomes annoyed by how much he pleads with her and accuses him of mistrust. Once secret irritation gives vent to petulant allusions, it easily turns into bitter words. Like all clumsy suitors, Eric becomes disgruntled and then unfair and vehement. He reproaches her for singing the ballad so often, constantly looking at the picture of the Flying Dutchman and, in sum, feeling pity for the condemned captain. He feels vaguely – but with the sharpened emotional instinct of a passion that senses vague dangers – that rapture, even if for the moment it has only a fiction as its object, can betray signs of latent forces. It might, like a long dammed-up spring, one day suddenly surge ahead and escape in bubbling cascades from its subterranean cave in order to gain entry into regions otherwise inaccessible to his timid nature – a nature that tolerates only the lukewarm temperature of an obscure existence. Instead of following the stirrings of her heated imagination, instead of identifying with the desire to spread happiness, life, and solace in the hearts that are most capable of such feelings, he behaves ever more

clumsily. At last, he earnestly accuses her of the offense of letting herself be influenced by a mere legend, a fable.

This upsets Senta's most tender heart strings; she is troubled in the most deeply rooted instincts of her soul, wounded in her hidden sympathies – the most vulnerable place in a woman's heart – offended in all her true, sincere goodwill toward Erik. She no longer meekly tolerates these reproaches: her submissive mood assumes an undertone of resistance; her impatience becomes resentment. After a few more such minutes her love turns into antipathy. Not without pride she asks: „Should I not be moved by the poor man's horrible fate?”

Here again Eric does not disavow the foolish obstinacy so typical of men in such skirmishes, where women always have wings to escape the surest, most well-aimed bullets, or coil themselves up as if into a hedgehog's barb when facing capture. They never lack for arrows that will stay and bleed, or needles that would kill with a perfidious kiss, or the platoon fire of a sneering burst of laughter that confounds and stuns us before we know whence it comes. Nor do they lack in solemn protestations that ring out like alarm bells, or in the nimbleness that enables lizards to slip away when one thinks one has clasped them, or in that strategic adroitness with which they encircle the opponent from all sides, or, like snakes, lie in ambush for their victim in order to jump on it and hold it ensnared in a thousand different ways.

Woe to those who launch a war with women without considering the rich arsenal of defensive – and especially offensive – weapons, which they hide behind the parapets of their weakness; behind the drawbridges of their ignorance, behind the bastions of their sensitivity, which are in turn entrenched behind the high walls of their dignity, their discretion; behind the deliberate denial of their goodwill, their tenderness and kindness. Woe to him who imprudently becomes involved in a quarrel with those creatures who are brilliant one day, absurd another, now good, now malicious, sublime one day, barbaric the next, and have all the advantages the moment one attempts to rob them of their independence. For women, endowed with the spirit of contradiction, always know how to uncover the failings of others – whether through magic or divination – but find it more difficult to recognize their own.

Woe, therefore, to poor Erik who appears clad in the unwieldy armor of rational arguments and fancies that rational arguments might get the better of a woman. His inappropriate weaponry only hinders him; his lance breaks into pieces like a reed against a silky lace collar, which is stronger than a breastplate; his halberd strokes merely split the air and tire his hand. The force of

his cudgel is paralyzed by a single glance! Poor Erik, one pities him! But then how many Eriks have to be pitied in the world! “*My suffering, Senta, does not move you?*” he calls out with wonderful naiveté. How accurately this comports with nature! This reveals the full range of a man’s narrowness: an egotist who has fallen in love and who dispenses with any tender indulgence for the mysterious fanaticism of a woman’s imagination whose chaste silence he should never violate. Erik is unwise enough to tap the treacherous scale of a woman’s judgment, which is not swayed by two weights or measures but rather by a hundred weights and measures, namely, by *comparison*. At the same time his lack of experience is punished by one of those barbs that these *angels*, like vipers, always hold battle-ready. “Don’t boast! What can *your* suffering be? O! prahle nicht, was kann Dein Leiden sein?” Senta answers with the seriousness, the profound and true tragedy of passion, which rattles even the composure of a man of the world and deprives him of the cold-bloodedness necessary for ridicule. How can Erik compete with the fantastic nobility of the Dutch captain? What virtues can he exhibit in comparison with the pain of someone cursed? How can even a good man, a tender lover, a renowned huntsman, a good-natured companion rival the ill-fated enormity of a being pursued by the vengeance of fate itself? Erik would have done better to just let Senta sing her ballad, gaze at the picture, and harmlessly rhapsodize over it; at least she would have thanked him for it. With a fierceness that is seldom lacking in those *charming creatures* whose list of virtues does not always include consideration, gentleness and even truth, Senta leads Erik before the portrait, to let him taste the joy of a comparison that he has provoked, forgetting that in such cases the entire catalogue of reasons a man believes would speak for him – such as birth, standing, talent, previous tokens of love, costly pledges, holy vows and so on – turn directly against him in the mind of a woman. And if it should occur to him to crown his mistake by perhaps suggesting that he cannot possibly regret being neither cursed nor eternally persecuted, nor an eternal wanderer, the woman is lost to him forever. This callousness is the coup de *grâce*: in her eyes he is nothing but a monster of insensibility, a cold materialist, a loathsome epicurean.

“What can your suffering be?” Senta says, in gloomy annoyance.

Fühlst Du den Schmerz, den tiefen Gram,
Mit dem herab auf mich er sieht?
Ach! was die Ruh’ ihm ewig nahm,
Wie schneidend Weh durch’s Herz mir zieht!

Pain and remorse, that’s what I see
Each time I meet that haunting stare.
Ah, how the force of that cruel degree
Can stab my heart with cold despair.

As though her convulsing, beating heart were about to break, she covers it with her trembling hands. „Woe is me!” Erik exclaims, „I am reminded of a wretched dream! May God protect you. Satan has ensnared you.“ (Weh mir! es mahnt mich ein unsel’ger Traum! Gott schütze Dich! Satan hat Dich umgarnt!) Senta, worn out from excitement and tired of his futile torments, and indeed eager to listen to his account of the dream, settles down in the armchair and closes her eyes, partly not to have to look any more at Erik in the flesh, partly to conjure up the object of his jealousy, the Dutchman, in her mind’s eye. With her head carelessly thrown back, limp arms, crouched like someone grown weary of a tiresome presence, she initially pays hardly any attention to Erik’s words. By and by she appears to fall asleep, and yet to perceive the narration more clearly. In her clairvoyant slumber her gestures accompany the tale, and soon her own words anticipate his. The vision reveals itself. Magnetic powers, sibylline vision, Swedenborgian clairvoyance live in the Norwegian maiden. The accursed ship and its captain are no longer a fiction for her. She hears and sees them; she knows where they are, senses their movements, their arrival. Enraptured, she sees her father draw near with the *pale man*, just as in Erik’s dream narration, in which he had dreamed that both arrived, that she ran to meet them and sank down before the Dutchman who raised her up and passionately embraced her. “And then?” she asks, as she rises halfway, with glowing cheeks and a blissful smile on her lips. “And then” – Eric replies, full of panic, – “I saw you fleeing into the sea!” At these words Senta raises herself straight and tall, her eyes stare fixedly, wide open, her glowing cheeks having become deathly pale, she stretches out her hand and exclaims in deep, prophetically resounding tones:

Er sucht mich auf, ich muss ihn seh’n!
Mit ihm muss ich zu Grunde geh’n!

He seeks me out! I must be his!
I’ll go with him to the abyss!

Full of terror, as if confronting a paroxysm of madness, Erik wrings his hands and, sobbing, bursts out with these words:

Entsetzlich! Ha! mir wird es klar!
Sie ist dahin, mein Traum sprach wahr!

Oh Senta! What will you do!
You will be lost! My dream was true!

and rushes out of the room in a frenzy of terror.

Senta, who has remained alone, turns gracefully to the portrait, as if it might fathom the loving coquettishness of her gestures. Extending her arms, she approaches it, eyes brimming with love, and, as one becomes aware of the faint beginnings of the curse motif, Senta sings, *mezza voce*, as if she were directing the question to herself, the refrain of her ballad: “Ah, haunted ma, who can tell when you’ll find her?” She is completely absorbed by the image of an unknown lover, sighing and moaning over his fate, when the door opens – the captain standing in the doorway. He matches the picture exactly and evokes one of the old master portraits hanging high on the wall in faded gilt frames, proud and silent, who witness the centuries pass by, without a wrinkle in their face or a speck of dust on their costume. It doesn’t take much timidity to experience a gentle shudder at the sudden appearance of this Van Dyck becoming flesh and blood, this immobile, pale ghost. When Senta, at the sound of the door, turns and glances at him, she lets out a shriek driven by terror – and spreading terror in its turn. She remains frozen in place, as if turned to stone, and regards him with a frightened yet firm and courageous glance, as if wanting to gather all her courage to follow this apparition anywhere – even unto death. She stands there like a statue, mute and eloquent, trembling and bewitched; her voice seems suddenly silenced, while the curse motif is heard, as if from a world of pain and suffering.

After a while the Dutchman glides toward the foreground, like a shadow, without gesture or movement. He fixes his eyes on her, not once losing sight of her. Daland watches him, astonished at his daughter’s astonishment, asking why she doesn’t rush to him. She embraces her father without turning away from this odd stranger, whose face she observes quietly and steadily. To her questions about him, Daland responds that, in possession of immense riches, he is exiled and roams in foreign lands, hoping to find a new home among them. “Will you be offended” he adds, gently taunting her. Senta looks straight into the eyes of the mysterious guest and lowers her head quietly and lovingly. With poorly concealed satisfaction and fully displaying his well-founded smugness, Daland now turns to the wealthy guest in order to revel in his admiration of Senta’s beauty, as a result of which the business is settled. “Admit: a glory to her kind,” (*Gesteht, sie zieret ihr Geschlecht!*) he says to the courting stranger who, serious and approving, nods his head. Daland feels obliged to keep the conversation going, since the two young people show little sign of supporting him in the matter. He tries to bring them closer by imparting confidential news, announcing to his daughter that he has already promised her hand to this noble exile. Without any further response than a melancholy gesture of affirmation, Senta

communicates – as if instructed by some inner inspiration – that she feels her father himself has caused her undoing and that she freely consents to it. He shows her several jewel cases, but she doesn't turn her head to look at them even hastily. Because the two lovers remain stubborn in their silence, Daland wonders, with the simple shrewdness of an elder, whether he might not be superfluous here, whether it would not be better to let the two come to know each other undisturbed. He is delighted with his sudden idea of withdrawing; but before he goes, he turns once more to his guest to whisper these words to him (whose deep significance he does not suspect, although they strongly influence the action): "Trust me, she's true as she is fair." (Glaubt mir, wie schön, so ist sie *treu*!) Daland says these words only as a renewed enticement of a rich suitor, lest he were intimidated by so bizarre a reception.

The long duet between Senta and her *pale* lover fills the second half of this act and represents the culmination of the whole opera. The essence of this perfect drama – this tragedy played out in the highest and deepest regions of the soul – is concentrated in the exchange of words and feelings between these two extraordinary individuals. An excess of selfish pride caused the fall of the Dutchman, and only through Senta's excess of self-sacrifice can he be raised again. He is too absorbed in his pain – which has become second nature to him – to possibly bring about a self-generated deliverance. Senta does not know the tortures of his pain; she is conscious only of the power of their deliverance. But both are filled with the same divine fire from which the flames of love burst forth into a radiant aureole.

We have arrived at the most passionate, most sublime moment of the entire work. The Dutchman lightly touches his forehead as if trying to gather his thoughts before the vision of this beautiful, pure woman, who oddly consented to their union. Though her penetrating glance indicates that her action is voluntary, he wants to convince himself that she is no illusion of his fancy, no Fata Morgana of his feverish hope, which is reborn – against his will – whenever his allotted time has run its course. That gesture removes his dark plumed hat whose clasp is reminiscent of the mysterious carbuncle stone with which the legend so often embellishes the Prince of Darkness when he comes to earth in the figure of a knight. This gesture is his first sign of life. Until then he had stood rigid, motionless, like a zombie conjured up from a coffin. Only now does human motion seem to stir him. No longer do his eyes blaze forth like burning coals under the broad brim of his hat. His white temples are surrounded by rich brown curls, waiting

to be caressed by the hand of a woman. His facial expression, now lit up, drives away fear and awakens interest. As if in a state of catalepsy, Senta stands before him, her eyes unmoving. From the orchestra the curse motif arises, which seems to evoke someone condemned to eternal suffering, who is summoned from the grave only to hear a fresh judgment, a change in punishment. Two bassoons sound its rhythm – three strokes of the kettle drum bring it to a close. There is still no dialogue after this long silence. Both speak quietly to themselves about the feeling of anxious surprise that overcomes them in the wake of the sudden, unexpected and unbelievable realization of a secret premonition. Initially, we hear two simultaneous monologues. The Dutchman begins:

Wie aus der Ferne längst vergang'ner Zeiten
spricht dieses Mädchens Bild zu mir:
Wie ich's geträumt seit langen Ewigkeiten,
Vor meinen Augen seh' ich's hier. –
Die düst're Gluth, die hier ich fühle brennen,
Sollt' ich Unseliger sie Liebe nennen?
Ach nein! Die Sehnsucht ist es nach dem Heil:
Würd' es durch solchen Engel mir zu Theil!

Out oft the mists of ages unremembered
Her gentle image speaks to me:
For in my dreams of yearning long unnumbered,
This was the face that I would see. –
This dark desire, this flame within me burning,
What does it signify? Is love returning?
Ah no, salvation is my only goal:
God grant that she may save my wretched soul!

He remains self-absorbed, mistrustful. He fears being deceived by fate once again, and all the more painfully, as his heart is already seized by admiration and love. Still raptly gazing at the Dutchman, Senta thinks of the many tears she has shed over his sufferings, the heated prayers to God pleading that she might be chosen to save him. Thus did martyrs, in ecstatic indulgence, inwardly renew their faith, when the hour of suffering, the fervently longed-for last moment drew near, and united all strength, all rapture into one supreme impulse. What is striking here is the restraint in the use of instrumental colors in the orchestra. It seems as if it could not – or dared not – add any explanatory gesture to the glorious figures of the two lovers. Only the horns play a lively restless pulse, which we perceive as the impetuous beats of two hearts. The phrases are broad and long-drawn out, rare examples of such majestic, slow streams of melody. This dual monologue of mutual contemplation and recognition by the two lovers seems to create an atmosphere in which every atom possesses the power of magnetic attraction. It elevates us, like an irresistible current of air, to a pinnacle full of electric fragrance and love-drenched incense,

until – in gradual transfiguration – our entire being, with all our senses, floating through the brilliant clarity of luminous oscillations, reaches the peaks piercing the infinite blue of the sky: the very summit where these two souls meet.

Now, at last, the Dutchman approaches the young Norwegian maiden and asks her if she is willing to carry out her father's pledge, gain his salvation, and cause an end to his suffering. With the frankness of a noble soul, he scorns any guile. He does not need a spoken word from her to assure him she knows the truth. Her silent scrutiny, her merciful glance has already convinced him that this time he is not dealing with a naive girl but with a superior being; and for that reason, he is addressing her directly in the appropriate tone. With that feminine tact whose lovely charm contrasts in noble women with the boastful curiosity of narrow-minded women, Senta avoids the open disclosure of the secret and leaves her knowledge veiled in modesty.

Wer Du auch sei'st, und welches das Verderben,
Dem grausam Dich Dein Schicksal konnte
weih'n,-

Was auch das Loos, das ich mir sollt' erwerben:
Gehorsam wird' ich stets dem Vater sein!

Who you might be, whatever Fate devises,
to spread its grim destruction in your way:

whatever pain my future life comprises,
my father spoke and so I must obey!

At Senta's last words, spoken like an irrevocable vow, the horn's rhythms become more urgent – as if her heartbeats redoubled in this moment that will decide life and death. She hides the chaste fire of her ardent love under the covering mantle of childlike obedience. This trait calls to mind antiquity – Penelope's answer to her father's question whether she desires to leave the parental home to follow Ulysses as his wife: she falls silent and hides her face in a veil.

So unbedingt, wie? könnte Dich durchdringen
Für meine Leiden tiefstes Mitgefühl?

So swift and sure? My sorrows seem to move
you
As if you knew my suffering before.

the Dutchman exclaims with growing warmth. Senta's reply to this anxious question seems less the answer of a lover than scrutiny of her own heart, an inquiry into the resolve demanded by her calling, when she sings in quiet soliloquy "Oh how you've suffered! How I long to soothe you?"

(O welche Leiden! Könnt ich Trost Dir bringen?). The unhappy one has heard it, understood it. He does not speak of a love that others could have felt for her. Kneeling down, he greets her as a messenger from heaven and both sing together: “If there is any hope for my salvation, Almighty God, with her it rests (O, wenn Erlösung mir zu hoffen bliebe, Allewiger durch diese sei’s!) – “If there be hope for his salvation, Almighty God, with me it rests!” This is the most elevated expression of an emotion which, in its nobility, is separated by a chasm from the lowlands in which erotic farces and comedies are performed – where there is not even the faintest suspicion of the existence of love’s tragedies, its heroic epics and eternal transfigurations. It is the highest formulation of a feeling so unconditional and boundless that it assimilates every element, feeds on opposites: transforms sorrow into pleasure, sacrifice into bliss, renunciation into complete possession, abasement into triumph, death into life, time into immortality, darkness into light, damnation into happiness.

Too proud, however, to receive such a gift, to accept such an offering, to enact such a sacrifice, to gain his bliss through such a pledge, to purify himself in such blood, to bathe in such tears, to endanger such innocence, to corrupt such a soul, the Dutchman rises again. And by taking up, once again, the lament from the overture, which there he had entrusted to the morning breeze, which he then repeated when setting foot on the hospitable land of Scandinavia, he paints for her the whole terror of the terrible fate to which she might fall prey in her radiant youth and tries to hold back the frail maiden from so harsh a fate. Thus, he gains comfort in knowing that he would – *equally* magnanimous, *equally* ready – renounce *his* salvation for *her* happiness. Senta responds with the triumphant energy of emotion, the firmness of belief, and the enthusiasm for a freely chosen calling. Her response resonates with the bliss of a heart in which virtue and passion, love of duty, and the duty of love, are united in soaring incandescence.

Wohl kenn’ ich Weibes heil’ge Pflichten,
 Sei d’rum getrost, unsel’ger Mann!
 Lass’ über Die das Schicksal richten
 Die seinem Spruche trotzen kann!
 In meines Herzens höchster Reine
 Kenn’ ich der Treue Hochgebot: –
 Wem ich sie weih’, schenk ich die Eine
 Die Treue bis zum Tod!

I know a woman’s sacred duty;
 Trust well in that, unhappy man!
 Leave unto Fate the right of judgement
 Over all those who defy its plan!
 Love has revealed my true vocation
 I feel its power with every breath
 This is my gift, my consecration.
 I’m faithful unto death

The poetic beauty of these eight lines is increased by the powerful yet tender melodic declamation: powerful like a firm resolve, conscious of its power, tender like balm pouring forth. The accompanying woodwinds entrust to the words alone the expression of her utter courage, while they encircle it with a sphere of endless love – as if the maiden wanted to bear the suffering of her heroism and sacrifice alone, and gave us the gift of contemplating her act with reverence. Only twice do the violins press forward into her answer, with a figure taken from the characteristic melody of the Dutchman (Ex. 22a). Based on the same chord, and due to a harmonic shift, it reappears in the major key, (Ex. 22b) the way a smile of happiness glows on the same lips, which we saw tremble in pain – like a ray of joy in eyes darkened by long wanderings through all the earth's zones.

The two voices now join together in a duet full of trembling excitement, like an embrace that binds two souls together forever. The sunlight of passion streams forth from its zenith into the thick darkness of despair, slays the nocturnal dragons of misfortune, rains on the deserts of discouragement, makes the deserts of dismay bloom, and drives away all mutual apprehension. Under the sun's bright glow, the flowers of hope flourish; the song of nightingales rings in the dwindling hours; every moment is illuminated by a new dawn; a wonderfully luminous stream flows over all life's wounds, closing and healing them. "here he has found his destination, here may he rest, his ship secure! (Hier habe Heimath er gefunden, hier ruh' sein Schiff in sich'rem Port!) exclaims Senta. But this vivid outpouring of her brave love, her powerful devotion, is immediately followed by a prayer for heavenly assistance. With the humility of a servant of the Lord answering to higher orders than the drive of loving desire, she upholds the god-fearing modesty of sacred resolutions, which finds contentment only in renunciation. Calm clarity and the strong will to fulfill her mission to the end; full understanding of the sacredness of this goal; the difficulty of achieving it – these ring out from her words: "Almighty, may the force that exalts me strengthen this heart and make it true!" (Allmächtiger! was mich hoch erhebet, lass es die Kraft der Treue sein.) Her beloved presses her to his heart with a fierce, extreme paroxysm of gratitude bordering on complete madness, a delirium of love. He draws new strength in the fight against his evil stars from the immediacy of her virtue, from this voluntary guarantee of love. Like a gradually fading nightmare, the burden of his pain disappears; he breathes more lightly as

if in higher strata. The blood returns to his hollow cheeks, his lifeless eyes light up again, a warm joy flows through his stiff hands and his shivering limbs! Both are in love! The harshness of fate no longer holds any terrors for them. They are exultant! There are joys on this earth – rare, but almost superhuman joys, which no words can express. The angels of heaven float protectively above them; and they alone may revel in their sight, undazzled by their Tabor radiance. Enveloping clouds shield them from earthly gaze, and only art can reveal them to its initiates.

At first it might appear as if this duet, extending through some four hundred bars, might be overly long. But they who listen in order to hear and understand – not simply in order to have heard and not understood – will not deem a single moment of its unfolding superfluous. It will be impossible for them to remain cold in the presence of this demonstration of feelings – initially reserved and immobile, then shy and fearful, and finally more glowing, more vivid and intense – which draw everything into their magic circle. This scene carries us so deeply into the pained exaltation of the lover, into the boundless happiness of the beloved, that even the tiniest cuts would injure the unity of the whole.

This is, in effect, the counterpart to the great duet in the third act of *Lohengrin*. Both scenes, with the differences due to the changed emotional situations, have not yet had their equal on the stage, both in regard to the representation of love and its most ardent desires and innocent raptures, and in regard to the form and shaping of the musical phrases, which carry us – like on an outspread magic cloak – sphere upon sphere into distant regions, where, in solemn rhythms, the purified essence of passion seems to escape the breast drop by drop. But the roles are exchanged in the two scenes. In *The Flying Dutchman*, one man's sin of pride is expiated through the liberating sacrifice of a woman: she accomplishes this sacrifice through her own effort, by virtue of her strong will. In *Lohengrin*, the woman's weakness destroys all the magic of manly virtue. In both the woman holds the fate of the man in her hands. He is dependent on her; it is up to her to make him happy for all time or to fill him with eternal sorrow.

When one takes a closer look into the foundation of Wagner's plots, one may deem them dramatizations of the cult of the "eternal feminine" in all of its forms, which Goethe placed, like a keystone, at the end of the gigantic structure of his *Faust*. For Wagner, as for Goethe, it is woman, created by nature as the most magnificent blossom of *feeling*, who purifies and sanctifies

man, in whom the *deed*, as the fruit of *thought*, ripens. Woman thus becomes the third, balancing component in the nature of man, the solving agent that liberates the perfect harmony of his being, the indispensable facilitator of his triumph, his salvation. Her desire for devotion, which is satisfied only through man's desire for possession, and her redemptive love completes and fulfills the gaps in man's ability to love. The offering of a woman's heart, which is the greatest love, removes all the discordances in man's destiny. It infuses him with a conciliatory element so that he may partake of happiness through the delicate, secret bond with which feeling connects thought and action. But should she refuse the sacrifice of renunciation – in whatever form this might appear to her – then she takes away from him the sonorous chord in whose sound alone he can become conscious of and fully enjoy his entire being. She leaves him to the conflict between the ceaseless desire of his mind and his thirst for action without the possibility of mediating this conflict through the desire of his heart – in other words, she leaves him to misfortune and unhappiness.

What poet could have grasped this great mystery with more profound instinct than Wagner? He transported the unfolding of love to the most fragrant regions, extended its range from the here and now towards infinity. Who has more eloquently portrayed the rapture, the exultant happiness of two hearts joined together, or the deep, incurable pain of love? Who has glorified the feminine element of humanity more nobly? Who has made us bow more deeply before young maidens armed with spiritual weapons and heroic courage? Who has sung more fully of the passion whose very giddiness he beautifies, whose ecstasy he raises up to the porticoes of heaven? Who has demonstrated better than he that it is given only to his strong, manly characters to endure the aura of this holy of holies, the glories of which are hidden to the blindness of coarse, weak men? When Wagner portrays woman as the necessary mediator between a man's limited, often opaque thought, his restricted, often misled vigor on the one hand, and his overbearing need for a limitless, unconditional emotion, on the other – an emotion which grows in him with his thoughts, with his vigor – he attests to the fact that the need for this third principle emerges most tangibly in the most thoughtful and most vigorous men (the former shown by Goethe, and the latter by Byron). And when he glorifies woman as the indispensable path to man's redemption, he does not leave him in sluggish inactivity, since redemption can only be won through the love for love.

We regret that the drama's second act does not end with the love scene; the curtain ought to fall with the last notes of the duet. Throughout the course of it, the listener has been enveloped in rare and noble emotional keys for such a long time that the somewhat banal C Major-feeling at the entrance of Daland, Mary, and Senta's friends seems disagreeable. When Senta lays her hand in the Dutchman's, openly and before everyone, she cannot raise the intensity to what has gone before. Although only for a moment, Daland's intervention leaves a disconcerting impression.

V

In the orchestral introduction to the third act we hear the final portion of the love duet (Ex. 23). Senta's exclamation (before she implores the aid of the highest power), "Was ist's das mächtig in mir lebet?" and the words of the Dutchman, "Du Stern des Unheils sollst erblassen . . ." (Ex. 24) are followed by the line of the ballad so often repeated since the overture, "Ach! könntest Du, bleicher Seemann, sie finden!" An ingenious bridge leads to the sailors' song heard during the merchantman's departure in the first act. Its happily spirited rhythms had announced – like the image of an approaching joy – the amusements which are now becoming real, as the curtain is raised for the third act. The scene shows the harbor; the Dutchman is anchored alongside Daland's ship. It is festively decorated, draped with pennants. Like garlands of sparkling flowers, a host of colorful lights glimmer like delicate threads intertwined in the rigging between the masts and yards. The crewmen carouse and dance on land and have a good time – as is the custom of the sailor when, tired of the privations of a long journey, unconcerned about the morrow, he enjoys all the pleasures of the day. After all, has he not brought home riches from afar? Isn't his wife – or bride – fairer and happier than ever? Laughter and rollicking joy prevail: all the fun, noisy cheerfulness, confused disorder of a popular festival. The song being struck up is known to us from the overture, where it contrasted with the awful desolation of the ghost ship. Even now it remains dark and silent, as if enveloped in an invisible veil. Its dark rigging, its red sails appear in somber shades against the background of dark clouds, which have settled in the sky over it and contrast with the dolled-up and flirtatious appearance of the neighboring Norwegian. The Dutchman's looks frightening, like places haunted by ghosts.

But the jolly sailors don't trouble themselves over this. Their celebrations happily progress, and a joyous mood rises from the filled mugs. The women appear with new provisions, with refreshment for every hunger and thirst. The sailors try to get hold of the content of the baskets with all kinds of common jokes, gallant turns of speech, erotic insinuations, which bubble up out of the rejoicing like foam. But the maidens already know of Senta's betrothal, think of the companions of the rich bridegroom, and prevent them from taking all the food away. Since none of the Dutchman's crew is among the Norwegian sailors, the maidens climb the quay's parapet and call out to them. The deck is empty; there is not a living soul on the ship – as if it had been abandoned or deserted. Daland's crew mocks the girls for wanting to squander the splendid creations of their culinary talents on such sullen comrades who would prefer to sleep than to enjoy their gifts and company. The maidens again call out and listen. The deadly silence continues; it is poignantly represented by a minor chord in a distant key, breathed *pianissimo* by three low horns (Ex. 25).

There is astonishment, almost shock. The crowd, until now noisy and joyous, is taken aback; but they don't want to admit it and redouble their jokes. "Are you dead?" they ask their silent mates. But their laughter is forced, like laughter accompanied by fear. The women take courage and renew their shouting (albeit ironically), in order to rouse those sleepers out of their apathy. The men join them with taunts and mocking comments. But, since the eerie minor chord, the rhythm has been restrained as if by a faint trembling; the music seems to reflect an inner motion that they try to hide from each other. Tired of calling out, the men and women stop once more in order to listen. After a complete silence there sounds a sustained minor chord similar to the first one (Ex.26). Driven by intense curiosity – which is partly excited, partly held in check by fear – the sailors and maidens hail the mute ship once again. They pause for a third time, and a third, similar, chord follows. Sounded *pianissimo* and full of mystery, it is even more effective (Example 27). Discouraged now, they all hurriedly leave the quay and the ghost ship with a speed that looks like flight.

At the drinking tables, however, they recover all their old insouciance, *joie de vivre* and spirit. All the baskets are emptied and all the provisions meant for the lazy neighboring crew are seized. They now embrace all the more eagerly the joys of feasting, dancing and carousing. As soon as the banquet gets out of hand the women withdraw. When the men are among themselves, they once again take up their earlier song. This time the orchestra accompanies them in a different

way. The strings mix in sparkling trills in the low registers, like the buzzing of drunkenness (Ex. 28). When the bacchic rejoicing of the refrain – the *Hussassahe! Johohohe! Hussassahe!* – reaches its greatest intensity with a rising chromatic tremolo in the strings, a blurry dark blue flame hovers over the Dutchman’s foredeck, as if the glowing fire of Hell had forced its way through a crack. The chromatic run in the orchestra suddenly ends with the interval of the curse motif. It appears here in B minor – like black pitch oozing from the tips of Pluto’s scepter and suffocating all of life’s joys. The Dutchman’s crew suddenly emerges from the darkness and gathers around the mast – and fills the air with a wild, shrill song:

Johohe! Johohe! Hoe! Hoe! Hoe!
 Huih-ssa!
 Nach dem Land treibt der Sturm.
 Huih-ssa!
 Segel ein! Anker los!
 Huihssa
 In die Bucht lauft ein!
 Schwarzer Hauptmann, geh ans Land!
 Sieben Jahre sind vorbei!
 Frei' um blonden Mädchens Hand!
 Blondes Mädchen, sei ihm treu!
 Lustig heut',
 Bräutigam! Hui!
 Sturmwind heult Brautmusik – Ozean tanzt
 dazu!
 Hui! - Horch, er pfeift!–
 Capitain, bist wieder da? –
 Hui! – Segel auf! –
 Deine Braut, sag', wo sie blieb?
 Hui! - Auf, in See!!
 Capitain! Capitain! Hast kein Glück in der Lieb'
 Hahaha!
 Sause, Sturmwind, heule zu!
 Unsern Segeln läßt du Ruh'!

Yohohe! Yohohe! Hoe! Hoe
 Huissa
 To the land drives the storm –
 Huissa!
 Reef the sail! Make her fast!
 Huissa!
 Bring her into the bay! –
 Haunted captain, go on land,
 Seven years have passed away!
 Seek the golden maiden’s hand!
 Seek the love that won’t betray!
 Happy day! Hui
 Marry her! Hui
 Gales blow a tune for him. –
 Waves do a dance for him!
 Hui! – Did he call?
 Is he there? Has he returned?
 Hui! – Hoist the sail! –
 But the bride, where can she be?
 Hui!– To the sea!
 Without aim! Without hope! Have you failed
 once again? Hahaha!
 Howling wind and storm make moan,
 Hurl at us the rising sea.

Satan hat sie uns gefeit,
Reissen nicht in Ewigkeit

Satan guards us as his own,
Safe in all eternity.

This demonic bacchanal, this witches' Sabbath, surges through the wildest modulations – as if from summit to abyss, from billow to surge, from gaping gulf to raging vortex: with rough cries, piercing laughter, wild profanity, satanic delight and mocking whistles – accompanied by six piccolos whose piercing tones in the highest registers strike the ear like a shower of arrows shot from dwarves' crossbows. The wind machine, which imitates the raging of the storm, is occasionally intensified by tamtam beats, as if a band of monster claqueurs had gathered, who, amused by so horrifying a spectacle, applauded enthusiastically with hands of bronze. Daland's crewmen are too deafened by their own singing at first to be able to hear the racket nearby. But they soon become aware of the gloomy response to their cheerful refrain: the frightening antistrophe to their harmless couplets. They wonder if it is a delusion of their intoxicated minds, or sorcery, a conspiracy of evil spirits? To ward off their uneasiness, they try to forget the wild, eerie echo, to drown out that singing with their own cheerful remedy. They repeat their song a step higher, and then another step. Each time, however, they are interrupted and outdone by the hellish "Huihssa, –Johohoe! Johohoe!" of the Dutchman, until a crescendo and fortissimo of savage and diabolical power silences them completely. After this strange contest, during which drunkenness and cursing spurred their efforts along, the ghost choir continues alone in biting, mocking triumph, until the swelling torrent of their wild singing ends in a cataract of horrible laughter by the hellish sailors (Ex. 29), while the silenced Norwegians cross themselves without looking at the evil spirits and flee this place of terror. The horror of this frenzied laughter is heightened by the benumbed silence that follows it. All is quiet: not a breath stirs the air. The ghastly sailors have disappeared. Everything is gloomy and silent, like a churchyard at night; and, like a flourish to this curse-saturated dithyramb, the horns and bass drums announce the curse motif. After the horns and bassoons have reminded us of Senta's words, "Ah, haunted man, who can tell when you'll find her", it seems as if the piece were about to end in unison; but the eerie minor chord that had sounded three times to everyone's terror in the previous scene returns once more and, during the actual silence that follows, holds the mind in suspense (Ex. 30).

One will find few works among the masterpieces of music to compare to this scene in terms of bold invention, strong colors and sheer lavishness in its combination of elements. The drinking scene is a genuine kermesse, not after Teniers, with his small-scale realism but rather one in the manner of Jordaens: full size and richly colored, with dominant reds and purples – where exuberant lines and plump flesh shimmer and sparkle with the pleasure of material things, the contentment of a good meal, the crude merriment over beer and brandy. We have here an effective picture of a popular feast with its typical groups and life-like, contented faces. The rhythms are given striking prominence. The singing from the ghost ship can only be compared to a dark storm – the kind Rembrandt, had he been a painter of seascapes, might have sketched and illuminated with his unique mysterious semi-darkness, or to a scene by the so-called Höllenbrueghel,⁴⁰ if he had painted *al fresco*.

The musician who is capable of following every line, every color, of these artfully shaped patterns will feel his hair stand on end when he descends into this mouth of hell and takes in the multiple figurations of the orchestra. A substantial number of full, sonorous voices is necessary for the performance of this double chorus – voices which would know how to attack the brusque, broken-off leaps with lightness and to perform them with that fantastical expression which cannot be easily characterized or prescribed and which only the intuitive intelligence of the singer can discover and create. If this musical scene were ever performed by one of those immense choruses that occasionally convene, and if it were a compact and well-organized group sure of its task after conscientious rehearsing and permeated by the spirit of the piece, it would create (in a locale with good acoustics) an extraordinary, never-before-heard effect. The overture, the Dutchman's monologue, the great duet and the scenes just described, reveal Wagner's substance and significance. They exhibit his characteristic genius – the stamp of the master; and many dramatic works, renowned for similar scenes, pale and dim before them.

Senta appears, already wearing the pretty costume that Norwegian brides traditionally wear. She flees before the bothersome Erik, who does not miss this favorable opportunity to shower her with the most tender reproaches. Like all weak souls, he cannot bear the *fait accompli*; he hopes and doubts – when this is no longer the appropriate time – just as earlier he had, for no reason,

⁴⁰ Pieter Brueghel the Younger 1564-1638, to whom were erroneously ascribed a series of scenes from hell, actually painted by his brother Jan Brueghel.]

doubted and despaired. The idea, constantly nourished by his jealousy, that someone else could be preferred to him will not enter his head in its full reality. At first, he had frightened Senta with all his baseless pestering; now he defends, inch by inch, a hopelessly lost terrain and will not believe in a defeat that he himself had prophesied. He exhibits vulgar bewilderment in the face of extraordinary decisions, to which it is difficult – indeed impossible – to respond, because those who understand them require no explanation and those in need of an explanation will never understand them.

The captain, arriving on the scene, concerned about this conversation, remains quiet and listens. Senta tries without success to end it by telling Erik that she must not listen to him any longer. In a charming, melodically moving cavatina, he evokes all his recollections of her love. He enumerates all the silent pledges of her goodwill which he had taken for promises; he revives them anew before her and exerts a kind of final right over a dwindling love by making her share in his suffering: by tormenting her with his torment. The Dutchman, listening, thus learns that Senta has been in love, that she might in the future perhaps bemoan the loss of this gentle, amicable love, rue her reckless devotion, and finally – Oh woe! – forget her sworn loyalty, break her oath and thus fall victim to eternal damnation. He is too deeply in love with this noble woman to possibly expose her to this mortal danger. With the rash resolve of a strong-willed spirit, he hastens to her, takes his farewell and, rushing toward his ship, calls out to his crew:

In See! In See! für ew'ge Zeiten!

Um deine Treue ist's gethan!

Um Deine Treue, um mein Heil!

Leb' wohl, ich will Dich nicht verderben!

To sea! Away to sea forever! –

For you have broken your faith,

And my salvation is destroyed!

Farewell! I never could destroy you.

The crew appear on the foredeck and repeat “To sea! To sea!” to which the captain adds: “Say your farewell, farewell to land forever!” (Sagt Lebewohl auf Ewigkeit dem Lande.) But Senta rushes to him, clutches his arm, and holds him back with reproaches of how he could so quickly lose faith in her loyalty. “Both you and God betray my trust! Your oaths of love only deceive me,” (Ich zweifl' an Dir! Ich zweifl' an Gott! In See! In See! Dahin! dahin ist alle Treue!) the Dutchman answers, as if devastated.

When Erik sees his indifferent betrothed transformed into a fierce, undaunted woman in love, he loses his senses. He cannot account for this unexpected contradiction, and can explain this singular behavior only by the intervention of infernal forces. Crying out for help, he rushes to free Senta from witchcraft and hellish delusion by force. In this decisive moment, when the captain sees Senta exposed to the greatest danger, and believes his own welfare – which he can no longer hope or wish to obtain through another being – is lost for all eternity, he cannot bear to maintain his tacit understanding with the beloved woman. She must no longer read between the lines of his heart; he rejects the alternative of a suspicion of betrayal or regret on her part. In a tone that requires the declamatory power of an unusual vocal instrument in order to be completely understood and conveyed he sings:

Erfahre das Geschick, vor dem ich dich bewahr'!
 Verdammt bin ich zum gräßlichsten der Lose;
 zehnfacher Tod wär' mir erwünschte Lust!
 Vom Fluch allein ein Weib kann mich kann
 erlösen,
 ein Weib, das Treu' bis in den Tod mir hält.
 Wohl hast du Treue mir gelobt, doch vor
 dem Ewigen noch nicht; dies rettet dich!
 Denn wiss', Unsel'ge, welches das Geschick,
 das jene trifft, die mir die Treue brechen:
 ew'ge Verdammnis ist ihr Los!
 Zahllose Opfer fielen diesem Spruch
 durch mich: Du aber sollst gerettet sein!
 Leb wohl! – Fahr hin, mein Heil in Ewigkeit

Now learn the dreadful fate from which you
 have been saved
 For I am condemned to such terrible perdition,
 Death were to me a joy beyond belief!
 I could be saved, but only by a woman
 Whose love was constant in the face of death.
 You did indeed declare your love . . . but only
 To me and not to God. That saved your soul!
 Then know the dreadful fate that lies in store
 For those whose sacred vows to me are broken:
 Endless damnation is their fate! –
 Countless victims have already paid
 The price: but Senta, I have saved your soul.
 Farewell! For I am damned forevermore

In total despair, wringing her hands, Senta calls out that she knows who he is and the duty that she has pledged to fulfill – and that she wants to *save* him. Erik rushes in, with Daland, Mary and the whole frightened crowd. “No!” the Dutchman cries out, seized by wild madness in this struggle between love and salvation, between love and renunciation:

Du kennst mich nicht, – Du ahnst nicht, wer ich
bin!

Befrag' die Meere aller Zonen, befrag'
Den Seemann, der den Ocean durchstrich: –
Er kennt das Schiff, das Schrecken aller
Frommen:

Den *fliegenden Holländer* nennt man mich!

You cannot know or dream just who I am!

But every sea and every ocean, and every
Sailor who sails across the world
Will know this ship, the terror of the godly:

The “Flying Dutchman” is my name!

With these final words, he approaches the curse motif, without fully repeating it (Ex. 31); his crew, however, takes it up immediately and sings, in muffled tone: “Johohoe! Johohoe!” The Dutchman now succeeds in tearing himself loose from Senta. He throws her into the arms of her father, jumps on board and – with amazing speed – has the ship push off. Senta struggles for a moment, then breaks away from the hands holding her back, reaches the rocks along the shore and, calling out to her beloved

Preis' Deinen Engel und sein Gebot!
Hier sieh mich, treu Dir bis zum Tod!

Praised be that Angel and her decree!
Since I am faithful, you are free!

she hurls herself into the waters. At the same moment, the ghost ship, sailing away at a distance, sinks down into the waves. Soon thereafter we see the sky open and magically light up. Senta and the redeemed Dutchman appear in a halo and form the core of an aurora borealis, while the orchestra takes up the ballad motif in D major, as if in resolved, vanished pain, with a hymn-like rhythm, the same as in the closing of the overture (Example 32).

While the design of this libretto is simple, one easily recognizes that in a performance our interest increases from scene to scene, as the emotional development increases in intensity, in a gradual crescendo, until the ultimate tragedy of the final scene. There are really only two characters in this drama, one of which, moreover, claims our emotional engagement only insofar as its intervention can have a blissful or disastrous effect on the other. In fact, the effect of the whole picture is focused on the noble, pale, gaunt figure who among all men is indelibly marked by fate: The enormity of the sentence reveals the grandeur of the guilty one; the benevolent hope

reveals the grandeur of the punishing power; the condition of salvation reveals the spiritual nobility of the sacrifice. *Abyssus abyssum clamavit*.⁴¹ The depth of unending pain can only be filled by an equally profound depth of unending love; the unfathomable darkness of the abyss of misfortune can be overcome only by the radiant luster and light of love, to which darkness has appealed from the beginning of time.

Four times the Dutch captain appears on the stage; and each time he awakens our sympathy more profoundly; each time his appearance creates a more intense effect. At first, we see nothing more than a silhouette, as it were, then a dark image. The third time we hear him speak, and finally we see him act. It is uncommon for a principal character to be given so dramatic an evolution: all the more fortunate the poet who has been able to achieve it. In the overture we catch sight of him from a distance, a plaything of the storms, which he disdains like a child's game. When he first actually appears on stage, we recognize the proud, noble soul who endures the penalty for his arrogance, who bears the grief of eternal loneliness. In the second act, however, we admire the fact that his harsh lot could not destroy the sweetness of feeling – an emotion that preserved his higher nature before his lowlier companions: that he, who had experienced only the cruel deceptions of love, has retained its delicacy. He has not forgotten compassion, although no one has shown him compassion; he has not forgotten devotion, which no one has shown him; he has kept alive the impulse for gratitude, though no one has given a prayer or thought to his unexpressed and inexpressible pains. The desire for redemption and the will for sacrifice have not become foreign to him whom no one has yet come to redeem. He blesses this “no one” and thus bestows a gentle blessing of his own and – suffering like no one else – renounces hope out of love and, rather than accept a sacrifice, prefers to sacrifice himself. At the last moment, when we believe that not a single drop more in the beaker of sorrow remains to him, we see him confront a more savage torture than he has as yet borne. A woman would bring him redemption – it was thus promised him. But he loves this woman, and, rather than expose her to the danger of eternal damnation, he renounces the happiness of holding her forever, gives up all hope of redemption, and accepts instead a hopeless eternity. The contest for the noblest sacrifice between two lovers counts among the scenes that touch noble hearts so deeply that they often take more

⁴¹ The abyss has called unto the abyss. Allusion to Psalm 42,7 which reads in English: Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts.]

pleasure in works that contain this beauty than in others whose greater riches of different virtues are valued more highly by the critics.

The entire layout of the libretto already reveals the true poet – a poet by the grace of God – whose every line, every stroke of the pen, rises far above the opera texts known until now. The first part of Act Three, when the Norwegian women and sailors, increasingly seized by fear, hail the ghost ship, has an effect similar to the ballads of [Gottfried August] Bürger. The verses, rhythmicized for the ear and richly painted for the mind, imperceptibly make the heart tremble. The dialog continues in distichs: each one seeming to add another shade to the darkness, which is already filled with fear. The short vocal numbers and ballads are on the level of the best in the genre. During his first sojourn in Paris, Wagner proposed to the Grand Opéra to set this text for a staged performance, but his name was not yet well known. For all that, his libretto was judged to be distinguished enough to be purchased for five hundred francs. However, the musical composition was not entrusted to his hands but to the choral director of the Académie Royale, a Mr. Dietsch; and the *Vaisseau fantôme* went through a number of performances in this setting and on this stage – without Wagner's name being mentioned.

For *The Flying Dutchman* – text and music by Wagner! – to produce the full effect intended (as much by its grandiose construction as its poetic emotion), fortune would have to bring together two extraordinarily endowed artists to assume the two principal roles, when even just one is rare. There are works whose outstanding merits emerge even through a mediocre performance – in the same way that one is able to judge paintings whose principal merit lies in their composition, perfectly well from engravings (even though the pleasure gained from them lags behind what the experience of the masterpiece itself accords us). With other paintings, however, unless one has experienced from the original itself the magical effect of color, the eloquence of the brush, one should say nothing at all – not even mention them. Who could comprehend the *Gioconda* of Da Vinci, the *Madonna D'Alba* of Raphael, or the *Diogenes* of Ribera – works of utter simplicity in conception yet elevated creations in the ideal realm of the mind, ideal transformations of matter through art – before internalizing the whole emanation of the immediate presence of the original? Where the lines effectively merge into the colors and vanish, what is left for the engraving, since there the line alone expresses the soul? Can one pretend to know those works of genius unless

one has probed with one's own eyes the depth of thought, the glowing fire of emotion, which acquire form and design in these elusive modulations of color – in the delicate rhythms of proportion? Whoever has examined only what one could call the residual part of a work – which analysis is able to take apart, which one can reconstruct by using the same materials, which skill is able to imitate – who has not, so to speak, looked at these truly living creations eye to eye – that individual cannot form any opinion on the matter. For these works emit an aura that suffuses us with blissful feelings, awakens all the alertness of our soul, all the activity of our thoughts, offers an object for our admiration and a subject to our reflection. Such an observer can at most be attracted to such works owing to received opinion or the superficial structural outline. By the same token, certain musical compositions can only unveil their inner meaning, shine in their full splendor, disclose the whole majesty of their expression, when all the requirements for a consummate performance come together – when they can produce perfectly, and in its entirety, that which the author had in mind to create. What in painting is the *viewing* of an original is for music *the perfect performance* of a masterpiece.

We see striking examples of this in the fate of whole schools, which disappear when their tradition is lost among their practitioners. Think only of the great sacred works. Do not the works of a Palestrina, a Lassus and others become a subject of scholarship, of archaeology, of conscious and retrospective admiration? Do they not cease to be part of the living art? Do they not become incomprehensible to the audience – because performers have lost the secret of their interpretation with the result that the works no longer possess their integrity and we today do not understand what they were meant to say? In modern performances these works often appear unrecognizable – like certain pictures of great masters that are covered with thick layers of retouches, hardened varnish or soot. The skeleton of a score can certainly be restored, but the soul is lacking, along with its pulse of life and an understanding of its motion.

When one considers the substantial number of works – even those in contemporary style – whose full understanding, whose poetic content can be achieved and reproduced only by a performance that brings to the fore its intangible elements, then one cannot (as is sometimes done) denigrate the importance attached to virtuosity. For one realizes that, in order to reach the pinnacle on this artistic path, an independent, significant intellectual education is just as necessary as mechanical training. Of all the works of Wagner, it probably is *The Flying Dutchman* that calls most urgently

for gifted, outstanding singers and a consummate performance, if it is to be understood completely and have its full effect. As in Beethoven's *Fidelio* or in the last scene of Gluck's *Orfeo*, here, too, an appropriately powerful impression can only be achieved – that is, the soul-stirring electricity of the work can surge forth – only when singers of rare talent completely lose themselves in their roles. They must be brought to life on the stage; and it is the task of the performers, during a short time span of imagined reality, to breathe into the characters they represent the abundance of life with which the author has imbued them and made them into immortal types.

Wagner has repeatedly declared that the singer of his Lohengrin had yet to be born. These words may sound vain at first, but they are not so at all. Wagner feels, rightfully, that he has reached a stage in dramatic music prepared by Gluck and Weber. Provided with infinitely more diverse means than the former and a more significant rational and combinatorial mind than the latter, and being, moreover, both a poet and musician, he has at his disposal the whole store of resources with which the great declamatory style can manifest itself in its most perfect form. This style, however, more than any other, must be permeated, steeped, saturated with poetry. It is closest, among all others, to the genius of poetry: it is ruled by its influence, borrows its laws, requires its knowledge and advantages. The poet and composer Wagner is the descendant of a new marriage of ancient Gaea and old Neptune. He has inherited their double kingdom: he rules over the land and over the waters, stretches out one arm over his continental dominion and the other over the kingdom of waves. The absolute power of his genius sets the boundaries for the solid land of poetry while he calls to the flood of rushing waves of sound: "This far!" He orders and administers his realm with a sovereign hand; he dictates the boundaries of his creative will to the powers under his control. He prevents their chaotic confluence; he gives the wonderful basalt of poetry as a solid bed to the surging waves of musical sound, so that their moisture may penetrate it and bring forth fruit. He thus unites music and poetry and bans emptiness from the world he has designed – from the drama. He eliminates all the weak scenes, all the fissures, all the breaks in continuity, which have been regarded, until now, as indispensable transitions in an opera. He lets neither action nor gesture stagnate merely for the sake of old musical habits. Richer in detail and more comprehensive in construction than any works preceding his in this style, his creations

appear at just the time when everything is coming together to make the expressive style dominate the stage.

The first masters of this school have all been sufficiently studied, probed, understood and appreciated. The present generation is no longer enthusiastic about great works in which other styles were especially and exclusively extolled. Other masters have created a kind of transitional period by successfully mixing, unifying and mutually complementing both principles. Driven by the trends of the times, they have instinctively and spontaneously afforded declamation greater latitude and thus have contributed to both an understanding and a wider acceptance of it.

The immense, ingenious resources of the great theaters, the extraordinary progress in instrumentation, the expansion and greater diversity of harmony and rhythm, all make it possible now to advance and multiply their effects owing to the abundance of ways in which they can be combined. Today the school founded by Gluck, supported by these developments and strengthened by the experience of seventy years in the opposition (during which all other styles seemed to have had better chances at success and more viability), can confidently offer battle to its rivals, whose charms are visibly withering. It may find in this renewed conflict – by slow, gradual conquest – the means to avoid its worst pitfall: monotony.

In our view the victory of this school, from this time forth, is beyond doubt, its acknowledgement only a matter of time. It is impossible for this school not to occupy the first rank on the stage, while other fields will have to be found and made arable for purely or abstractly melodic music, whether it be in the church or the concert hall, in dance or military music, or in song. But it is enough to bear in mind that the continued intake – both morally and physically – of substantial, exquisite and highly seasoned nourishment must necessarily render the taste buds unreceptive toward less skillfully prepared fare. One can foresee, without special divinatory powers, that at a certain point in time (whose arrival one cannot precisely determine, because chance and external circumstances play so important a role in such matters) our century will become accustomed to this kind of beauty, will become familiar with its secret laws and with the inner logic of this school – which repudiates the mediocre more than anything else – and will recognize its full value.

Every significant compositional period has also given rise to a school of singing that corresponded to its needs and demands. Without referring to matters that get lost in the twilight of former times, it suffices only to call attention to the changes in singing methods over the course of the last three centuries in order to convince ourselves that they were always brought about by composers whose divergent paths caused them to undergo various modifications. We will see that Stradella observed different principles than Carissimi, that Farinelli no longer complied with the rules that Durante taught at the famous conservatory in Naples, that the great singers trained by Rossini distanced themselves completely from the art of singing admired in the eighteenth century. The decisive adoption of the declamatory style will be followed sooner or later by the creation of a new school of singing. Since we ascribe the triumph of that style to the works of Wagner, we assume that the changes, which it must bring about in the artistic education of its performers, will take place at first, and mainly, in Germany.

Until now the spirit of the German muse has evolved in every branch of instrumental music, in the handling of vocal forces and in the lyric genre, under the inspiration of titanic masters, with such power of striving and passion that, thanks to this development, all serious interest and the entire future of this art is now concentrated in Germany. As Italy was in former times, Germany is now its blazing hearth. Since Bach, a nearly unbroken succession of artist princes of the greatest majesty, a spiritual lineage of great men, has made this country the first in the world of music. A single branch of art is not yet in full bloom; it barely lives, at great cost, like an exotic plant in a hothouse – to wit: musical drama.

By creating for his native country a musical drama in harmony with its national genius, Wagner also imposed on it the duty to establish a school of singing corresponding to *his* dramatic style.

Since its beginnings, opera was imported into Germany rather than indigenous there. Even though Hasse was German, his music was nonetheless thoroughly Italian, and since that era the greatest German opera composers remained in a way estranged from Germany. Although Mozart, in tragic moments, already grants the declamatory style a noticeable share of its birthright, his operas nonetheless still demand singers trained in the Italian school. Gluck and Meyerbeer wrote for the Parisian public, and Wagner came close to doing so. Among the

composers of the first rank, there is only Beethoven, who shrunk back from composing a second opera due to twenty years of disdain for his first and only, and Weber who, had he lived longer, would probably have continued to write for England, since his *Oberon* experienced a better fate abroad than his *Euryanthe* at home. Of the four truly and specifically German works of these masters, which Germany can claim as fruit grown of its soil, and which are intrinsically German in the sense that they are nowhere else so well understood and deeply felt as in Germany, only *Der Freischütz* has enjoyed a prompt and universal success. The three others were, for a long time, thought of as monstrosities of genius. Theater directors left it to scattered musicians to praise them enthusiastically and instead neglected them as not belonging in their sphere. Indeed, their repertoire lives off foreign products, from which an arbitrary medley is fashioned according to equally foreign styles. And nonetheless, through chance or instinct, it is specifically in Germany where works that grew under the direct influence of the declamatory style, or approximated it, have lasted the longest. It is in Germany where this style has asserted itself most successfully and has been best understood – through Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, Spontini, Weber and others. Wagner is the result of this slow but steady progress. His works, even his theories, could only have been written by a German and for Germans. The opposition he has experienced until now is based on transitory reasons and artificial habits. The sympathies he has garnered are essentially German and nationalistic, and for that reason they will remain victors on the field of battle, since it would indeed be unheard of in the annals of a people that it would forever repudiate an author who has absorbed and glorified in so vivid a manner its myths and history, its traditions and emotional character, through artistic forms peculiar to his genius. Wagner is the founder of German opera – or of *musical drama*.

This new artistic genre, however, can achieve its full luster only through interpreters different from the artists now performing. In Germany a school of singing has to be created, for at the moment it hardly has any singers. Those now available are content with emphasizing the virtues of their vocal instruments and in the best case with being musical, without ever having devoted themselves to a continual, specialized and profound study of singing. A single fact should suffice to prove my words: the complete absence of professors and conservatories who would have earned a brilliant reputation, as in other countries, by teaching in this artistic field. Here distinguished artists never boast about being students of this or that master or German school;

for, if the truth be told, they owe everything to themselves – unless, perchance, they were educated abroad. Nor are they connected by any unity of style. It would be hardly possible to classify a number of them into one category: in the essential features they do not resemble each other at all. Each one follows his own inclination and is educated randomly, depending on how much his position and inclination allowed him to allot more or less time or application to it. An instrument of that kind, badly prepared and prematurely worn out, is exploited erratically and randomly and often fails the singer. When it is still fresh, he doesn't really control it; and when he achieves the rarely acquired suppleness, the youthful richness is gone. And when, exceptionally, the voice outlasts, unpunished, frequent and hasty misuse, this is only true for rare human beings who seem to be made of iron or gold. Such cases must not, therefore, be allowed to establish any universal norm.

The Italian school, on the other hand, has always proceeded in a methodical way. Even today when, weak, pale and degenerated, it has turned its back on its fatherland in order to find its livelihood on hospitable but cold ground it owes its marvelous bloom and continuous energy to method. As a child of the South, sun, light and warmth, it cannot stand up to Nordic ice and midnight fog. Yet – away from home, far from the Penates – it can take pride in having an eminent standard bearer: Garcia in London.⁴²

It is indeed remarkable that in Germany, the country of theories and systems, of the most sophisticated artistic currents, the art of singing is left so exclusively to the arbitrariness of praxis, indeed of empiricism. The reason is probably that opera has not yet become national and, accordingly, has not produced any school of singing that corresponds to its character. We have observed that *Der Freischütz* was the only work of a composer of genius that, despite being essentially national, quickly found a home on every stage. But still: one work does not create a repertory; and singers, to this day, must switch, one evening to the next, from Rossini to Spontini, from Meyerbeer to Auber, from Donizetti to Halévy, from Gluck to Bellini, from Spohr to Flotow. For sure, this universal culture, this unlimited hospitality toward all forms of art, could be a point of honor for Germany – if only clearly defined genres were distributed over

⁴² Manuel Garcia, 1805-1906, brother of Maria Malibran and Pauline Viardot, was a legendary singing teacher in Paris and London.

different groups, if some criteria were applied in the choice of works borrowed from foreign countries, if the theaters that do have some regard for the interests of art would establish differences in their endeavors. Instead, the smallest theater constitutes a microcosm, does not wince before any difficulty, finds “nothing too great, nothing too remote” – nothing that would exceed its resources. And, in the final analysis, all theaters large and small achieve only a potpourri of heterogeneous ingredients so that such an *Olla podrida* spoils the taste of the public and makes the establishment of a national style impossible.

While singers in Italy limit themselves to a single self-contained genre, and singers in France make a distinction between *grand opéra* and *opéra comique*, in Germany the same performers must interpret the most diverse masters, the most opposing schools. Prevented from limiting themselves to a single genre, of turning down this or that role, they yield to the pull of their routine and finally reach the point of no longer having any doubts, trying anything, performing everything and – making a mess of everything. During the course of their theatrical careers, as opportunities arise, they learn to vocalize a little, declaim a little, scream a little, act a little – everything a little. Some do one thing a little better, others another thing – entirely according to the fortuitous state of their star. *Qui trop embrasse, mal etreint*. (Grasp all, lose all.) To whom can one more justly apply this proverb than to singers? Vocal virtuosity – its development into a flexible, obedient instrument capable of capturing every turn of the soul – is far less likely achieved through imprudent praxis, the constant mixture of all styles. This fragile instrument – unlike the wood of piano keys or violins – does not tolerate all errors in training, all crazy whims. Unless it is carefully trained and according to firm principles, it becomes stiff, dry, and soon weakens. If it can still perform a service, it is mostly distorted, faded, exhausted, half dead – not because the individual tasks were excessive but rather because they were too different, even contradictory. These tasks were taken on without the singer having prepared himself with exercises corresponding to the current demands of our theaters – because one has completely forgotten the principle that one can only sing well and long if one has *learned* to sing well and long. Since opera on the German stage increasingly drives other forms of drama into the background, there will be actor-artists – even important ones – who sing, some of whom unite rare talent with an excellent voice. But Germany does not have its own true singers, for there is still no truly German singing school.

Wagner's operas demand very beautiful, sonorous and mellow voices; noble diction; passionate, perceptive emphases; delicately suggested and finely expressed intentions; and a spirited stage deportment – all qualities which presuppose an extensive intellectual education along with conscientious study, begun at an early age, of works of a school to which one must be seriously and completely dedicated. If these demands seem excessive, one should just study the old lesson plans of the conservatories of Rome and Venice – not to mention those of Naples. Every hour of the students' day was regulated, and one required almost as many qualities from them as Cicero demanded from a good orator. Nine hours of every day were devoted to the initiation into the *great art*, not to mention religious and other practices that, in addition, were included in the schedule. For example, students were directed to do their exercises in a place with an excellent, sharp echo, so that through this exact imitation they *should recognize their mistakes*. And only after six, eight, ten years of such a novitiate did artists dare to appear in public. One might admire their high degree of perfection, their impeccable excellence, the magical effects that they created, but one cannot be surprised by them. But how is it with today's singers? Do the majority not receive their education on the boards – to the great dismay of musical ears and to the ruin of their own talent? Does it not seem that the greater the honoraria, the less one studies? Only when schools devoted to the declamatory style shall exist in Germany, as they existed for other works in Italy and for other purposes in France, when a generation of artists shall have been trained in the way that Wagner's characters demand, only then will one recognize their full, shattering magnitude.

Already in our day, however, Frau [Wilhelmine] Schröder-Devrient has shown, with the fire of her passion and the vitality of her dramatic acting and singing, what a wealth of noble beauty the declamatory style embodies. She has taught how one must conceive the characters of a Beethoven, Weber, Wagner. [Joseph Aloys] Tichatschek, owing to passionate devotion and a deep immersion in such roles, and owing to the lifelike relief he gave them, has earned great honor. Likewise, Herr and Frau von Milde in Weimar, who mostly portray characters created by Wagner with the most praiseworthy love and scrupulousness. Both can be acknowledged as masters in these roles owing to their noble stage acting and the pathos of their declamation. The principal roles in *The Flying Dutchman* urgently demand these qualities if they are to emerge from the surging foundation of a very nuanced, and often overpowering orchestra. Artists who

take on this task do not need a vocal range as wide as the parts of Bertram or Fides⁴³ They must, however, possess a noble sound, abundant power and rare opulence. Their timbre must be lustrous, velvety, and vibrant – like the strings of an Aeolian harp that tremble under the breath of passion. The monologue of the Dutchman, Senta’s ballad, and the great duet of the second act are the most significant moments of the drama and abound in difficulties. But the effect of the entire work would be ruined if they were not presented with a force that allows for no thought of fatigue: a force that – with not a trace of exhaustion – remains powerful from beginning to end.

⁴³ Characters from Meyerbeer’s *Robert le Diable* and *Le Prophète*, respectively.

Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*

January 1st, 1855. – Wherein might lie the importance that all of us attach to the imaginary demarcations in the flow of time – one of which we commemorate today – if not in the intense need felt by the mighty and fortunate, by good people and bad, the weak and suffering alike, to hope that the future will bring us what the past failed to grant? Or was the change of a number in the calendar enough to lend so special a weight to this day, which does not even mark the exact return of our planet to a given point in its journey? The end of one year and the beginning of a new one are strictly speaking, not things that actually exist; yet, whenever this arbitrary point in time returns, all of us, with a certain excitement, cast a scrutinizing glance at the past and look inquiringly toward the future. The reason for this seems to be the feeling we all share more or less consciously that the future holds promises that the past was unable to divine. Though the new year repeats, with seeming monotony, certain mental and physical events, a fixed succession of days and seasons, of activities and efforts – unmistakably similar to the previous year – there are always other unforeseen, unplanned outcomes brought about by new developmental stages of mankind, which nevertheless germinate and ripen at the same time and partake of the same efforts.

In art, too, the periodic return of similar challenges and achievements brings about completely different outcomes, because the perception of things changes as time rushes forward – just as buildings on a river bank look different to people sailing by, depending on whether they slowly approach them, are right beneath them, or gradually leave them behind. The traditional distinctions that mankind devises in order to calculate and divide the even flow of time can be compared to the marked off boundaries that distinguish one part of our globe from another. Just as these boundaries raise an expectation in the traveler of new landscapes and customs in foreign lands, so are we curious as to what may happen when, at New Year's, we enter a new time span. What new perspectives will open up to our peering glance, what monuments will reveal to us new forms of the beautiful? Those particularly interested in art want above all to know what yet unknown works of art will enrich them in the coming era.

Today one could answer them thus: “Do you see that dot gleaming far off there on the horizon? It's the gigantic outline of a great, majestic edifice, the likes of which we have not seen during

the whole course of our journey. Perhaps it will strike you as odd; perhaps you will find the style too lofty, the plan too colossal, the ornamentation too abundant and sumptuous. But you will have to concede that it is the most sublime monument among those that now exist.” We would also say the same to those who are intensely curious to learn something about the colossal artistic structure that Wagner has undertaken, of which we can only see the high scaffold far in the distance. We will have to cross those imaginary boundaries with which man divides the expanse of time; we will have to experience several times more a date like today’s before we may see the edifice with its fourfold entryways grow to its full dimension under the hands of this genius: the edifice he calls “*Der Ring des Nibelungen*.”⁴⁴ One of the four entries, however, is already built: *Das Rheingold* is completed and unfolds its awe-inspiring contours under the clear blue sky of Germany.

“What is this work about,” will be the question of those who glimpse it only through the veil of enveloping twilight, “a work from which something so extraordinary is expected?” Ask about paintings, we answer them, about the statues – singly or in groups – on cathedral portals, each of which narrates to those who gaze upon them an epic chiseled from stone. Ask about those hieroglyphic figures and sundry symbols, about the unusual festive round dances that can be seen on that Egyptian obelisk!

In *Rheingold* we see the depths of the river, and on its bottom magical water nymphs, who reveal more alluring charms than the Undines that Heine listened to furtively amid the crystalline flow of green waves, beneath the angled rushes that conceal them from unholy eyes.⁴⁵ Vain and spiteful, blustery and playful, these foolish women forfeit a treasure seized by a figure of nasty, hateful miserliness and overweening egotism who renounces the life of the soul, the soul of life: Love. The eternal myth! The eternal genesis of all evils! The fatal beginning of all human tragedies!

In the wake of the impish, delightful river nymphs, the titans of Nordic mythology appear. We see mighty, sorrowful Wodan [sic!], a victim enthroned: forced to rule and pining for love.

⁴⁴ Liszt: As is generally known, this is the title of the tetralogy which Wagner is currently at work to set to music; it dramatizes the most prominent myths of the Edda. The names of the four connected dramas are: *Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Der junge Siegfried*, *Siegfrieds Tod*. Wagner had finished the final one already in 1849 and had the whole [work] printed in the spring of 1853, although only for friends and acquaintances. In the fall of 1853, he began composing *Das Rheingold* and finished it in the spring of 1854. At this moment *Die Walküre* is halfway finished.

⁴⁵ See chapter 2 of Heine’s *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski*.

Fricka, his wife: the embodiment of virtue for those who prefer the anguish of hate to the errors of love, who would sooner dedicate themselves to the cruelties of envy, the havoc of discord than the profligate yearnings of the heart. And you, Freia! Sorceress: intoxicating youth, cognizance of life, overzealous affirmation of immortality, the most perfect blossoming of existence! Without you Walhalla is not worthy of the gods. Loge circles among all of these figures like an enemy lying in wait for spoils – like a flame which, with darting tongue, brushes against the substance it will consume.

“And what sorts of emotions do the characters impart to us?” one will ask. No one can as yet answer properly, even with the libretto and score before him, because no one has yet seen the structure in the rays of the bright midday sun, in which the filigree work weaving around its figures and shadows, its mighty contours, will become visible. No one can describe it because one is not yet acquainted with the other parts of the edifice and cannot arrive at an overall view of their mutual relationships and connections. But today one may already be certain of one thing: that the master of this work has devised a plan, which no one else has yet dared to imagine. Like Michelangelo, who transported the most perfect example of Roman art into the air by suspending the cupola of the ancient Pantheon high above the ground, Wagner elevated traditional opera to such a degree that the structure that seems perfect to us is a mere rooflet to his. While ancient and modern tragedy cultivated the practice of trilogy, it never appeared in works that owe their brilliance to two art forms that have flourished equally: to poetry and music. Although the latter had its role in the dramatic works of the Greeks, it surely could not lay claim to the equal status to which the musician of our day is capable of elevating it.

Faultfinders and worshipers of the past, critics and criticasters will not fail to cry “fire” and accuse Wagner of multiplying the already monumental opera genre by a factor of four, thereby deforming it – of making its character unrecognizable by inflicting all kinds of changes on it. We refer all of these critics to the spirit of Michelangelo: let him account for the daring venture by which a heathenish artwork was transformed into an altar canopy for the one true God. Did the style of the Roman temple and that of the Christian church remain the same? And what Roman who might suddenly rise from one of those magnificent tombs that adorn the Via Metella and come back to life would recognize the cupola so familiar to him atop the walls designed by

Buonarotti? Our familiar opera, likewise, will be transformed by Wagner's plan. Will it thereby lose some of its beauty or gain in beauty? *That's the question.*⁴⁶

If, in the time of Hadrian, whose beautiful columns still adorn the masterwork, a prophetic voice had described to a sybaritic Roman art connoisseur the edifice that was to rise up – millennia later – like a giant next to a dwarf, in the vicinity of that very same Pantheon, which he deemed the very pinnacle of art, wouldn't he have shrugged his shoulders? And we certainly could not hold that against him, because no description is sufficient for a full understanding of a work of art. Neither will we judge in advance the impression, which this daring miracle, this grandly conceived architectural ensemble, will create. We are profoundly convinced that the man of genius, uniting all his energies in striving after a goal, never makes a futile effort: that even if he pursues his mysterious goal circuitously, there will never be a lack of riches that spring from his hands. Would the thousandfold enrichment in spiritual and material interests which link us to America, would the complete encirclement of the entire globe have become our good fortune without Columbus's conviction that his path must lead him to the shore of India?

“Steure, muthiger Segler! Es mag der Witz dich verhöhnen,
Und der Schiffer am Steu'r senken die lässige Hand.
Immer, immer nach West! Dort muß die Küste sich zeigen
Lieg sie doch deutlich und liegt schimmernd vor Deinem Verstand.
Traue dem leitenden Gott und folge dem schweigenden Weltmeer!
Wär' sie noch nicht, sie stieg' jetzt aus den Fluthen empor.
Mit dem Genius steht die Natur in ewigem Bunde
Was der eine verspricht, leistet die andre gewiß.“

Schiller

Steer, bold mariner, on! albeit witlings deride thee,
And the steersman drop idly his hand at the helm.
Ever and ever to westward! there must the coast be discovered,
If it but lie distinct, luminous lie in thy mind.

⁴⁶ English in the original.

Trust to the God that leads thee, and follow the sea that is silent;
Did it not yet exist, now would it rise from the flood.
Nature with Genius stands united in league everlasting;
What is promised by one, surely the other performs.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *Columbus*, Translation by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Anhang II

Zu Wagner's *Fliegender Holländer*

Die Notenbeispiele der Ausgabe von Lina Ramann¹

Beispiel 1: Ouvertüre, T. 1–6

Allegro con brio

Viol.

f

Tromp.

Hörner und Fagott

marcato

Beispiel 2a: Ouvertüre, T. 10–13

Viol., Br. u. Celli
piu f
 Pos. u. Tuben

ff tremolo

Beispiel 2b: Ouvertüre, T. 15–16

Tromp. u. Fagott

Viol., Celli u. Bässe

Beispiel 3: Ouvertüre, T. 65–68

Andante
 Engl. Horn

Hörner
pp

Fagotte

Beispiel 4: Ouvertüre, T. 79–88

Engl. Horn u. Hörner

p *un poco*

Pos. *sempre p*

cresc. *dim.* *pp*

Beispiel 5: Ouvertüre, T. 89–95

Hörner

pp un poco marcato

Fagott

pp

Pos. u. Tuba

pp

Pauken

Beispiel 6: Ouvertüre, T. 102–104

Fl., Hoboen u. Viol.

Corn

Fag., Viol. u. Bratsche

p

dim.

Celli u. Bässe

Beispiel 7: Ouvertüre, T. 179–180

Corni

Beispiel 8: Ouvertüre, T. 203–204

Bläser

Beispiel 9: Ouvertüre, T. 337–340 (bzw. 338–341)

Vivace
Flöten u. Hoboen Tromp. Hörner
Pos. u. Tub.

Beispiel 10: I. Aufzug, Nr. 1, T. 24–27

Matrosen
Tenor
Bass

Beispiel 11: I. Aufzug, Nr. 2, T. 231–235 (bzw. 229–233)

Holländer

Wann al - le Tod - ten auf - er - stehn

Beispiel 12: I. Aufzug, Nr. 2, T. 266–272 (bzw. 267–273)

Holländer

Ew' - ge Ver - nich - tung, nimm___ mich auf!

Beispiel 13: I. Aufzug, Nr. 2, T. 290–297 (bzw. 291–298)

Chor
Tenor

Ew' - ge Ver - nich - tung, nimm___ uns auf!___

Bass

Ew' - ge Ver - nich - tung, nimm___ uns auf!___

Beispiel 14: I. Aufzug, Nr. 2, T. 275–277 (bzw. 276–278)

Viol.

ff Piccolo, Pos. u. Bässe

Beispiel 15: I. Aufzug, Nr. 2, T. 303–307 (bzw. 304–308)

Horn

Pauken *pp* *ritenuto*

Beispiel 16: I. Aufzug, Nr. 3, T. 50–53

Lento

Bratsche *p*

Cello

Pos. *pp*

Ophicl.

Beispiel 17: I. Aufzug, Nr. 3, T. 91–94

Moderato
Mit Ausdruck, aber ohne Leidenschaft
 Holländer

Durch Sturm und bösen Wind ver -

Viol. u. Celli

sempre legato
 Kl., Hörner, Fag., Viol.

Bässe

schla - - - - - gen,

Beispiel 18: I. Aufzug, Nr. 3, T. 482–483 (bzw. 484–485)

Hal-lo ho ho ho ho!

Hal-lo ho ho ho ho!

Beispiel 19: II. Aufzug, Introduction (Entreacte), (T. 1-4)

Allegro

Bläser *ff* Streichinstr.

This musical score is for the Introduction (Entreacte) of the second act, measures 1-4. It is marked 'Allegro'. The woodwinds (Bläser) and strings (Sreichinstr.) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords. The woodwinds are marked *ff* (fortissimo).

Beispiel 20: II. Aufzug, Introduction (Entreacte), (T. 9-12)

Bläser 6 *ff* Streichinstr. 6 Viol., Fl., Hob., Kl., Fag. u. Hörner Celli u. Bässe

This musical score is for the Introduction (Entreacte) of the second act, measures 9-12. It features woodwinds (Bläser), strings (Sreichinstr.), violas, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns (Viol., Fl., Hob., Kl., Fag. u. Hörner), and cellos and basses (Celli u. Bässe). The woodwinds and strings are marked *ff* (fortissimo). The woodwinds play a melodic line with sixteenth notes, while the strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Beispiel 21: II. Aufzug, Nr. 4, T. 322-325

Senta *p* *f*

Jo ho hoe! Jo ho ho hoe! Ho ho hoe! Jo - hoe!

This musical score is for the second act, number 4, measures 322-325. It features Senta's vocal line. The tempo is 6/8. The score is marked *p* (piano) and *f* (forte). The lyrics are: "Jo ho hoe! Jo ho ho hoe! Ho ho hoe! Jo - hoe!"

Beispiel 22a: II. Aufzug, Nr. 6, T. 443-444 (bzw. 442-443)

Bässe

This musical score is for the second act, number 6, measures 443-444 (or 442-443). It features the bass line (Bässe) in 4/4 time. The bass line consists of a series of eighth notes and chords.

Beispiel 22b: II. Aufzug, Nr. 6, T. 483–484 (bzw. 482–483)



Beispiel 23: III. Aufzug, Introduction (Entreacte), (T. 1–4)

Fl., Kl., Viol., Cello

Hörner, Tromp., Fag.

Bass
Pauken

Beispiel 24: III. Aufzug, Introduction (Entreacte), (T. 5–8)

Fl., Kl., Viol., Cello

Hörner, Tromp., Fag.

Bass
Pauken

Bässe

Beispiel 25: III. Aufzug, Nr. 7, T. 166–167

ppp
Hörner

Beispiel 26: III. Aufzug, Nr. 7, T. 247

Fag. u. Hörner
pp

Beispiel 27: III. Aufzug, Nr. 7, T. 255

Fag. u. Hörner
f

Beispiel 28: III. Aufzug, Nr. 7, T. 431–432

Fl., Ob., Kl., Fag.
Hörner Viola

Beispiel 29: III. Aufzug, Nr. 7, T. 608–609

Ha ha ha ha ha ha!
Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Beispiel 30: III. Aufzug, Nr. 7, T. 636–637

Hörner, Fag.
Pauken *pp* Tamtam

Beispiel 31: III. Aufzug, Nr. 8, T. 358–361 (bzw. 360–363)

den flie - gen - den Hol - län - der nennt man mich

Viol.

The musical score for Example 31 consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in bass clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are "den flie - gen - den Hol - län - der nennt man mich". The bottom staff is a violin accompaniment in treble clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and a final cadence.

Beispiel 32: III. Aufzug, Nr. 8, T. 392–395 (bzw. 395–398)

Viol.

ff Bläser

Celli

Pauke

The musical score for Example 32 consists of two systems. The first system has two staves: the top staff is for Violin in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and the bottom staff is for Woodwinds (Bläser) in bass clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps. The woodwind part starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system also has two staves: the top staff is for Violin in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps, and the bottom staff is for Cellos (Celli) in bass clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps. The cello part includes a drum (Pauke) part indicated by a triangle symbol.

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Three of his many publications are of particular relevance to this volume: "Liszt and the Weimar Hoftheater," in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 28 (1968); "Liszt and Weimar" in *Liszt and the Arts: A Collection of Papers Presented at a Liszt Centennial Celebration*, Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University, 1997; "Liszt on Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella*" in *Schubert and his World*, Princeton, 2014 (The Bard Music Festival Series).

Traute M. Marshall is a writer and translator born and educated in Germany. In 1966 she graduated from the State Conservatory in Hamburg with a Master's Degree in Music Education. After moving to the United States, she pursued graduate work in German Language and Literature at The University of Chicago, earning a Ph.D. in 1974. Her doctoral dissertation, *Der musikalische Stil bei Jean Paul*, is a study of musical influences on the style and the creative process of the German Romantic novelist Jean Paul. Several years as a free-lance translator followed. Her book-length translations include Charles Rosen, *Der klassische Stil* (Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1983), James Lyon, *Brecht in Amerika* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1984), among others.

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